The public domain Lysistrata Lee stories, by Pauline Ashwell.

Someone please rescue this child and kill this man.

Unwillingly to School may have some typos from my painstaking hand-transcription from the original PDF scan.

Unwillingly to School

Originally published in Astounding Science Fiction magazine, January 1958

The copyright was not renewed, leaving this story in the Public Domain.

* * *

Liz was sure to be an influence; for the protection of Mankind, that young miss had *to be trained!*

* * *

[[2:40pm April 15 2025]]

This may look like a movigram of Brownian Movement but no such luck; it is Russet Interplanetary College of Humanities Opening Day, four thousand three hundred twenty-seven other freshers milling around and me in the middle with a little ticket on my chest says Lee, L. because my given name is something not to mention; they say these kids came from one

hundred twenty-four planets just to study at Russel but personally of all points in the known continuum this is the one I would rather be any place But.

Freshers come in all sizes, all colors but a fair number are girls so there is one thing we will be finding in common anyway.

This may come as a surprise, that I am a girl, I mean. My tutor at Prelim School says my speech is feminine as spoken but written down looks like the kind of male character who spits sideways.

I reply that I talk like my Dad he is a character all right, male too but does not spit, if you spent your formative years with a filter in your kisser neither would you.

He says my flair for seeing the functional significance of the minutiae of behavior is obviously what got me chosen for the Cultural Engineering course.

Huh.

I know what got me into that all right I am not so dumb as I look.

You think I flatter myself? Brother, by what goes on I look dumb indeed. Maybe this is because of my hair, curly and pale colored—all right, blond. My eyes are blue as they come which is by no means sky color whatever books say, my skin is pink some places white others when washed and a visitor we had once said I had a rosebud mouth.

I am seven then, I do not hold it against her right away there are no roses where I grew up; when I landed here on Earth I hunt one up to see was it a complment.

Brother.

I find later they come other colors but this one is frostbite mauve, and the shape!

I wish to state here my mouth has two lips like anyone else.

Where I grew up is Excenus 23, how I got hauled off it is due to a string of catastrophes but the name of the biggest is D. J. M’Clare.

Excenus sun is what they call a swarmer, ninty-seven small planet in close orbits plus odd chunks too many to count, Twenty-three is the biggest, gravitation one point oh seven Earth diameter a fraction less, if you ever heard of the place it was because they mine areopagite there. Ninty-four per cent production for sale in the known volume of space comes from mines on Twenty-three; but for that reason to live there at all.

My Dad started as a miner and made his pile, then he took up farming and spent the lot, he has it all back again now.

Areopagite forms only in drydust conditions meaning humidity at ground level near above two and one half per cent rainfall None, hence from this farming on Excenus is something special, but miners are like other people they have to eat too.

When Dad started there was him and Uncle Charlie and their first year they fed two thousand men, nowadays the planetary population is eleven thousand three hundred twenty and there are seven other farmers, most of them started working for Dad and graduated to farms of their own. Nobody on Excenus eats trucked concentrates now.

Unclue Charlie is Hon as in secretary meaning no real relation. He is an engineer, when Dad met him down on his luck but able and willing to build diggers, harvesters, weathermaker for ten thousand acres out of any junk to hand. Had to be done like that because Excenus Haulage Company, the big company did all the shipping in and out of the planet, sold food concentrates. No competition welcome therefore no shipments seeds, agricultural, machinery, all that, would have been allowed through.

It takes Charlie two years to do his job, meanwhile Dad bones up the agricultural side. Nowadays there are a lot of books on drydust farming, they cover soilmaking, microbiology, economical use of weather,

seed selection, plenty more; at that time there were fewer and Dad read them all.

If he has sent for the usual texts E. H. C. might have caught on and had a little accident in transit, so Dad gets them in as *books*, I mean antique style, chopped in pieces and hinged together down the side. They are labeled Curio Fascimiles and disguised with antique pictuer covers mostly show the damndest females you ever saw, dressed in bits and pieces mostly crooked; some of them dead. People collect these things for some reason. Dad has one or two put on top with texts to match the outside, rest are textbooks on agriculture like I said.

Charlie offers to make reader-reels from them but Dad turns it down. He still has all those books packed in a row, when I was little he used to tell me how he learned all his farming studying that way, without using machines, it just showed you could still do it if you had to. Dad never had any education and it bothers him; I used to think that was why he kept on telling me this.

* * *

Well there are plenty of troubles not least with E. H. C. but Dad is not the type to give up; reason he started farming in the first place was he caught on E. H. C. were making it impossible for anyone to do just that; Dad does not like people who try and stop him even if it was not what he wanted in the first place.

3:01 PAUSE for lunch

3: 19 continue

I am born soon after the farm is really set, my mother walked out when I was three. She was fresh out of college with an agricultural degree when he met her, maybe the trouble was Dad caught on she knew less about drydust farming than he did, maybe other things. Excenus 23 is no place for a woman they say.

It is O.K. by me but I was born in the place.

Dad and Charlie raised me between them like the crops, this is to say carefully.

There are plenty more people now in Green Valley where the farms are, thirty or so and they change all the time. People who come out farm for a bit make their pile then go. We even get women some times. People's wives from Town come out to board sometimes, Dad lets them because he thinks they will Mother me.

Well mostly I manage to steer them off and no hard feelings, it is my home after all they got to be reasonable about if if they want to stay. Seems they do as a rule, Town is kind of tough to live in. Several stayed a year or more. So it is not true to say I grew up in a wholly masculine environment, I knew up to seven women for quite a while.

Green Valley is outside the mining area and about six hundred miles from Town. This has to be, Town gets most of its water combing the air and so do the weathermakers for the farms; anyway mining and farming do not mix so good. The Valley is twenty miles each way hedged by hill ridges up to seventy feet high. Outside is stone flats, dust bowl and tangle-mats of *Gordianus* scrub. Forty miles round about I

know it pretty well but the rest of the planet is about the same, except for Town.

This is where I was born. I was all set to stay there till Dad had his accident, first catastrophe on the way to this place.

I am up one day in a helivan watching the harvest on a thousand-acre strip at the edge of the farm, there is a moderate wind blowing from over the hill, so we are keeping the weather-lid over each row until just before the harvester gets there so as to keep the dust out of the grain. I am directing this.

Here at the edge the weather-lid is just above the corn, it runs from the weather-maker in the middle of the farm in a bi cone like a very flat tent, fifty feet high in the middle and four miles across. You cannot see it of course unless the wind blows dust across, or there is rain inside; the lid is just a layer of air polarized to keep dust one side, water vapor the other; just now you can see plainly where puffs of dust go skittering across.

The harvester gets to the end of a row on the far side from the road, I signal Biff Plater at Control and he draws the weather-lid in twenty yards. The harvester lifts its scanner at the end of the strip, wheels, and comes through the next swathe, with the big cutter pushing six inches above ground, stalks sliding back into the thrasher bagged corn following on the trailer behind.

Then I see Dad come along the road riding the biggest kor on the farm. Kor are *Pseudocamelopus hirsutinaris* part of the indigenous fauna we started taming to ride on about a year ago. Dad does not really enjoy it, he cannot get used to having no brakes but he will not give up.

I see right away he is having trouble, the kor slipped its bridle and navigating on its own, long neck straight out and Dad slipping to and fro in the saddle; his mouth filter is bumped out and waving behind.

The harvester is half up the field. I do not want the kor to be scared I yell to Biff, Turn it off quick! But

the controls are the other side of the shack from the weather ones.

Then the kor sees the scanner rearing on its stalk, it is not frightened at all thinks this is the great great grandfather of the species and charges straight across to say hello.

I am yelling to Biff and got my eyes shut, then he is yelling right back, I have to open them and look down.

The kor has gone straight into the second before it stopped. Dad has been thrown and the harvester stopped with one tread a foot from his head and a corner gone over his arm.

I bring the heli down yelling for help on all frequencies.

Dad is breathing but flat out; fractured skull, ulna and radius like a jigsaw puzzle, multiple injuries to the chest; the kor is in three pieces mixed up with the machine.

We call up the hospital in Town and they direct first aid over two-way visiphone while the ambulance comes. It takes seventy minutes and I am swearing to myself we will hire a permanent doctor if we have to shanghai him, after this.

The ambulance arrives and the doctor says we have done as well as can be expected, fortunately Dad is tough but it will be a two-month hospital job at the least.

They crate him up in splint plastic and load him into the ambulance. Buffalo Cole has packed me a bag, I get in too.

I am out again first thing, passengers not allowed.

* * *

I get out the long-distance heli and go straight to Town, I am waiting in the hospital when they arrive. I wait till they have Dad unpacked before I start to inquire.

These hospitals! It is all they will do to let me look at him, when I do he is lying in a kind of tank; his chest is the wrong shape, there is a mass of tubes round his head running to a punk, this is for resorption of blood clots in the brain; more too the other end for external aeration of the blood, he is not going to use his lungs for a bit.

I think this does not look real, Dad in all this plumbing, then I hear my breathing goes odd, next thing you know the doctors steer me outside.

They say it will be a week before the blood clots go and Dad wakes up but they will report by visiphone every day.

I say No need they can tell me when I visit each day.

They are deaf or something, they repeat they will call Green Valley each morning at thirteen o’clock.

I say Is that when they would prefer me to call in?

At least they have got it, they say Surely I will not fly six hundred miles every day?

I say No I shall be stopping right here in Town.

Then they want to know what friends I am stopping with, I say at a hotel of course.

Consternation all around No place for young girls to stop in this town, they make it out the toughest hellhole in the known volume.

I say Nuts there are hotels for transients and their wives too.

They flap wildly in all directions and offer me a bed in the nurses' hostel which is men only ordinarily but they will make an exception.

I say thanks very much, No.

In the end they tell me to go to the Royal Hotel it is the most respectable of the local dumps, do not on any account go to the Royal Arms which is a pub in

the toughest quarter of the town; they tell me how to go.

I put my luggage bag in my pocket; for some reason I have clutched it throughout; and I go.

Way I feel I do not go to the hotel straight off, I walk around a bit. I have been into Town of course shopping with Dad, maybe twice a year, but I do not seem to know it so well as I thought.

Then I find I have got to the Royal Arms or just near it anyway.

It is now late evening the sky is black except for stars, planets, and meteors crashing through every minute or two. The town is lit up but there are a few in the streets, quiet folk are home in another quarter the rest still fueling up indoors. Way I feel is some toughery would suit me fine to take my mind off, because taming kors was my idea in the first place. Maybe I will get a chance to try out that judo kick I learned from Buffalo Cole.

So I slip through the noise-valve doors one after another and go into the pub.

Brother.

The noise trap is efficient all right, outdoors no more than a mutter so there is a real wallop inside. Every idea in my head is knocked clean out of it, even th thought I might go away. Among other things are three juke boxes in three corners going full blast and I cannot hear them at all.

Part of the decibels come from just conversation, part is encouragement to a three-way fight in the middle of the floor. I am still gaping when two of the parties gang up on the third and toss him all the way to the door. I dodge just in time, he rebounds off the inner valve and falls right at my feet.

Everyone turns and sees me, and the juke boxes all become audible at once.

I go down on my knees to see if the character I have just missed meeting is still breathing or not. His pulse

is going all right but his face is a poor color wherever blood lets me see, I yell for water but competing with the juke boxes get nowhere. I am taking breath to try again when someone turns them off at the main, silence comes down like cotton-wool.

I ask for water in a whisper, someone brings it and tries to take me away.

I find I am clinging to the guy yelling He is hurt he is hurt! There is blood balling in little drops on my evercleans and smeared over my hands, I am trying to wipe it off with a disposable; not suited to this of course it crushes and goes away to dust and then the cotton wool feeling in my ears spreads elsewhere.

Then I am lying on my back with water running down my chin and a sensation of hush all round.

I try to sit up and something stops me. Someone murmurs soft nothings that fail to make sense.

I keep quiet till I have it sorted and then I figure I have fainted clean away.

Me, Lizzie Lee.

* * *

I sit up and find I am on a couch in a sort of backroom and there are faces all round. Half of them seem knocked out of shape or with knobs on, bashed recently ore previous.

The faces all jostle and I hear they are telling those behind She is sitting up! and the glad news getting passed along.

Someone pushes through the faces carrying a tray with food for six, I deduce they think I fainted from hunger or something.

I would put them right on this when I realize the feeling in my middle is because I last ate ten hours ago.

I weigh in and they appear pleased by this.

So I feel an explanation is owed them and I tell them my Dad is in hospital with an accident, you would not think they could get so upset about a perfect stranger, sure this will not last but it is genuine feeling just now for all that.

There is more buzzing and a kind of rustle and I find they are taking up a collection.

I am horrified, I cry No, no, they are very kind but I truly cannot accept.

And they think this is proper pride or something, they start to mutter again and someone says Well then no need to worry, Knotty will give me a job as long as I need it, won't he? Knotty is in the crowd somewhere, seems he is keeper of this pub. He seems to agree and I figure out he'd better.

I do not see why they are so sure I am indigent until I happen to glance down. I am still in my work evercleans I was wearing when Dad got hurt; also it breaks on me suddenly this is the worst quarter of the town no girl would come here if she could afford to be

elsewhere, even then not into the Royal Arms unless full of sweet innocence or something.

And I cannot speak.

When a bunch of strangers are mooning over your problems because you are a poor young thing you cannot tell them you walked in to look for a fight.

Truly, I could swear out loud.

In two shakes of a vibrator they have it fixed, Knotty will give me a job as long as I need one and I can have a room above the pub and at least fifty husky miners have sworn a personal guarantee no one within miles will lift a finger in any way I could not wish.

So what can I do?

I thank them and I walk out into the bar and when I get there I find the laws of human nature are not wholly suspended, there is a fight going on.

My bodyguard behind me gives a concerted roar and the fight stops and they look sheepish at me.

It is so clear that they expect me to look shocked and sorrowful that I cannot help it, this is just what I do.

I ask the cause of the fight and they shuffle and the bigger one says he is very sorry and would like to apologize Miss.

It turns out he has come in since I arrived and wished to get drunk with the minimum delay, the assembled party tell him Damsel in distress back of the bar and he says to hell with that, she is probably faking it anyway; he see this was error and regrets it very much.

And I have to make a production over forgiveness, he will never believe me unless I do.

So I am stuck.

* * *

You think all this will wear off in a day or too? Brother, so do I. At first, that is. But it does not. I have reformed the place overnight.

I begin to think getting drunk each night and working it off by fighting are not really their personal choice, all they need is a little stimulus to snap them out of it such as the influence of a good woman maybe and looks like I am elected.

I get so busy listening to assorted troubles and soothing fights before they come to the boil, apart from any job Knotty can give me such as putting glasses in the washer and dishing the drinks, I hardly have time to think about Dad except at the hospital each day.

He is dead out for seven days just like they said, while the blood clots get loose from his brain; also they set his ribs and arm and tack up things inside. My miner friends all cheer me up they say This is a good hospital and tell me all the times they have been put together again themselves, I say Oh and Ah so often I am quite tired it seems to please them anyway.

Then Dad comes awake.

He does not do it while I am there of course, but I am allowed to sit with him two hours the day after, they have shifted him out of the tank into a proper bed, and taken the plumbing away. Towards the end while I am there he comes round and says Hello Liz how have you been?

And I want to cry but I am damned if I will, I say, I am fine. And he is already asleep again.

I ring home like I do every day. Charlie is out so I leave a message, then I go back to the pub. I feel truly I could sing all the way, I do not notice until Knotty says so that I am singing anyway. Knotty is in a sour mood but when I tell him about Dad he fetches out half a smile and says will I be leaving them?

I say No Dad has another one month and twenty one days in hospital to go.

At this his face falls under three gravities and he says All very well for me. I say why? can he not afford to pay me?

He says what troubles him is the pub. Since I came liquor drinking is down two fifths, if anybody starts to get drunk the rest stop him in case something occurs to sully my pure girlish mind, it becomes clear that to Knotty this sobriety is not pleasing at all.

Well it is far from being my wish either, at least I think that at first then I think again Do I really want my pals back to the old routine drunk every night dead drunk Friday to Monday? This do-gooding is insidious stuff.

I go on thinking about it when I have time, this is not often because the boys are so pleased to hear Dad is better they allow each other to get quite lit, I have to head off one row after another.

I begin to think anyway this situation cannot last long, the pressure is building up visibly something is going to blow they need outlets for aggression and getting

none just now. Also I must do something for Knotty. I could tell him Dad will pay back his losses but Knotty's head is solid bone; if I once got into it I am not a dear little down-and-out, he would let it out again at the diagrammatic wrong time.

Things have got to end but they have got to end tidy with no hard feelings, I shall need help for this.

* * *

I got out that night as soon as Knotty is in bed and get to a public visiphone. I dial home, never mind it is one in the morning I want Uncle Charlie.

What I get is Buffalo Cole looking sleepy, he lets out the yip he learned from an old stereo and asks where I am and where I have been so long and so loud I cannot tell him for quite a while.

Then he tells me Charlie is here in Town.

He has assumed I am staying at the Hospital. They phoned today as usual, he asked for me and found I

was somewhere on my own; he busted into town straight off like a kor calf into a corn field and been hunting for me all over tearing out hair in bunches.

He is staying with a friend the far side of town, I ring.

Brother.

Now he has found me he has no wish to talk to me I am to stay in the visiphone booth and not move till called for well I suppose I can wiggle my ears if I like.

Charlie arrives in a heli four minutes later and mad enough to burn helium, he gives me the kind of character my pals sketch for each other when I am not supposed to be by.

He is not interested in excuses, he will get me out of whatever mess I am in for my father’s sake; I will come to a bad end some day but I can have the grace to keep it till the old man is on his feet again.

I have learned something these last few days, I do not yell back. I say I have been very foolish and I need advice.

Do not think this fools him but he is taken aback slightly. I get something said before he recovers and in the end I tell the whole thing hardly interrupted at all.

At the end he gives me a peculiar look like when one of his hatcharia gave birth to a parrot and says nothing at all.

I say Look Charlie my idea is this; he says Liz your ideas are the start of this trouble in the first place, you have been getting ideas ever since I knew them and every one worse than the one before, just let me think about this.

Then he says Well if you leave without explanations I suppose we will have these desperate characters hunting for you all over Town and if the truth gets out there will be a rumpus because of that, I guess you

better go back there for tonight anyway, but how are you going to get back in?

I say I have a key, does he think I crawled out the window? From his look I rather gather he does, Men are children at heart.

All the same I go back quietly and sleep like a tombstone.

* * *

In the morning I see Charlie at the hospital and he says he has an idea but seems he prefers to sit on it and see how it will hatch, I do not tell him what I think of this.

Then Dad wakes and says a few words and things look brighter and afterwards Charlie swears he has a real idea how I can get out of this without any hurt feelings, it just needs a but more work on it.

I go back to the Arms thinking my troubles are half over, Brother what error, this is where they begin.

That evening I am chinning to some types who cut up yesterday, I tell them how shocked I am how surprised how sad because they have backslid, they are always sure I feel like this. If I do not say it they get upset because they suppose my feelings too deep for words; I can do this sort of thing no hands now.

Just the same it takes some concentration, when the stranger comes in I hardly notice him at all.

He is a tall chap in the usual evercleans with filter mask over his shoulder, all that is strange is I have not seen him before, men stick to their own pubs as a rule.

He slides into a corner and swaps words with the regulars and I forget him altogether.

The clock strikes twelve, two hours to midnight closing, enter a tall dark stranger.

Short hair and big shoulders and the face that launched the campaign for Great Outdoors Shampoo, maybe twenty-two years old, he takes a quick look

round and I guess he does not think much of the place.

Well he should have seen it a week ago, now there is only one single juke box going and people are just chatting over drinks, not a fight in the place.

He comes up to the bar and taps someone on the shoulder to make way; try touching someone a fortnight back and stand well clear! This time the fellow stops his fist before it goes six inches and then moves over an inch or two and I am face to face with the stranger over the gap.

He looks at me and registers more surprise than I thought his face could hold, I say What are you drinking sir?

He swallows hard and says Beer please; something is displeasing him like mad but I cannot see how it is me.

I give him his beer and he gives me an unloving look and moves away, he horns in on one of the gatherings and starts to chat.

I am busy but I keep an eye on him and it seems to me the chat is getting too emphatic for health, I beckon over a miner called Dogface and ask what goes on.

He says That character been annoying you Liz? I say No is he annoying anyone else? Dogface says he asks too many damn questions someone will paste him any minute now.

I sign for another miner called Swede; these two are the steadiest around; I say Ride herd on this character and keep him out of trouble.

They say How? I say get into conversation and stop him talking to anyone who is prone to get mad.

They look doubtful so I tell them to talk to him, he is asking questions well tell him answers, tell him about

life on Excenus you can see he is a fresh-out Terrie, tell him about mining; that will be instructive for him.

Next time I look Dogface and Swede are one on each side of him talking away, the other types have all drifted off.

* * *

The stranger stays for an hour and they stick by him all the while, when he leaves no one has laid a finger on him, I have done a good deed this day. Dogface and Swde say they never knew they had so much to talk about, just the same the stranger did not look grateful to me.

Next day I go to the hospital as usual wondering if Charlie has hatched his idea.

Halfway there I feel eyes on the back of my neck. I look round and there he is again, the tall dark stranger I mean.

He strides up and says he wants to speak to me.

His tone is such that I think of Buffalo’s judo trick but he looks the type to brush it off with a careless reflex, I could wish there were more people around.

I say What about?

He says I know damned well what about, this is poaching and he will not stand for it, he will complain to something I do not catch.

I say he must be thinking of somebody else.

He sizzles behind his teeth and says I need not think I can get out of it by playing innocent because he will be able to trace me perfectly well. I obviously come from that establishment for muddy minded morons Pananthropic Institute of Social Research; everybody knows Excenus is Russet’s field-work place and no other school would crash it, let alone horning in on a practical that way.

Furthermore the dodge I am using was corny in the Ark or earlier.

I am much perplexed but more angry and ask what is he proposing to do?

He says Don’t worry I will find out later, I can guess he does not know either; but before I can say so he goes striding away.

I walk on getting madder as I go, this mystery on top of everything else is enough to drive me round the fourth dimension, and he will catch on to his mistake and I shall never hear it explained; however when I arrive I forget him because Dad is awake and fit for talking to.

Several times I wonder Shall I tell him the whole thing? but he is still sick, this is no time to tell him I am serving in a bar in the toughest part of the town.

We talk quietly about the farm and plans for the next year and things we did when I was little, all of a sudden I want to cry.

Then Charlie comes. One visitor at a time I have to go, Charlie needs some instructions about the farm.

I think I will go out and walk around, I do not like waiting in the hospital they think women belong some other place. I am halfway down the outside steps when there is a shadow over me and a voice says Excuse me, Miss Lee?

I turn and stare.

Brother what is this, are they making a stereo on Excenus, this is the handsomest man I ever came across. He makes the one this morning look like a credit for twenty all from one mold, I am certain I never saw him before.

He says We met last night though that was hardly an introduction, he is glad of an excuse to make my acquaintance now.

I think No this cannot be, yes it is, this is the gink I hardly noticed last night; same face same voice same hands and I never looked at him twice, how in Space is it done?

Brother, he called me Miss Lee!

I say there must be some mistake and turn toward the hospital again.

He says the hospital clerk told him my name and he saw me come out of the Royal Arms this morning.

Sing Hey for the life of a hunted fawn, now I am good and mad, just crazy. He says he thinks a talk would be mutually profitable, what I think is something quite different and I say it out loud. He has a way of doing things with his eyebrows to look amused, men have been killed for less.

He says What would the clientele of the Royal Arms think of that?

I say what the hell is that to him?

He says he will be delighted to explain if I will give him the opportunity but this is hardly a suitable place to talk.

There are no suitable places and I tell him so.

He says he has a helicar there, if I would care to drive it anywhere I like he will give me the key.

* * *

I begin to see what will happen if this specimen opens his face to Knotty and Co; I must know what his game is; I say O.K.

We are just getting into the heli when the air is sundered, Liz! here is Uncle Charlie and my reputation in pieces again.

He charges across and my companion says, Mr. Blair? which is Charlie’s name though I hardly remember, and he hands over a card which a name and some words on it.

Charlie reads it and looks baffled but not mad any longer.

I sneak a look at it, it says D. J. M’Clare and a string of initials, Russet Interplanetary College of

Humanities, Earth, it has Department of Social Engineering in little letters lower down.

Charlie says Liz what in Space are you doing now?

M’Clare says he has to make Miss Lee a rather complicated apology, this being no place to do which he has suggested a ride, it will be much better if Mr. Blair will come along too.

I do not know how it is done but ten seconds later Charlie is inviting him for a drink to the house where he is staying and I am tagging along behind.

The house is close to the hospital and well to do all right the air is humidified right through, I never cared for alcohol much and I am more tired of the smell; when Charlie has done bustling with drinks M’Clare begins.

He says he understands Miss Lee had an encounter this morning with his pupil Douglas Laydon.

I say Great whirling nebulae not the lunatic who called me a poacher? He says Very likely, Laydon came here to do a practical test and finding I had anticipated him was somewhat upset.

He explains that students in Cultural Engineering have a field work test after two years, this one had to make a survey of the principal factors leading to violence and try out short-term methods for abating some in a selected portion of the community on Excenus 23 namely the Royal Arms pub.

M’Clare says Excenus 23 is a very suitable spot for this kind of field work, the social problems stay constant but the population turns over so fast they are not likely to catch on.

Charlie nods to show he gets this, I get it too and start to be angry, not just mad but real angry inside, I say You mean that dumbbell came out here to push people around just for the exercise?

He says field work is an essential part of the course for a Cultural Engineering degree, I say Hell and

hokum nobody has any right to interfere with people just for practice, he says Not everybody possesses your natural technique Miss Lee.

I say Look that is different, I was not trying to find out what makes people tick then fiddle with the springs and think I done something clever.

Charlie says Shut Up Liz.

This man does not believe me, well I did not start this one purpose but now I remember all the times I listened to someone tell me his troubles and thought What a good girl I am to listen to this poor sucker, how wise how clever how well I understand; I do not like thinking this.

Then I find Charlie has started to tell M’Clare the whole thing.

I will say for Charlie he tells it pretty fair, he does understand why I cannot just let my pals find out I have fooled them, whatever he may have said; but

why does he want to tell it to this character will not see it at all?

Then he says Well Professor, if I understand what Cultural Engineering stands for this is a problem right in your line, I would very much welcome advice.

* * *

M’Clare says nothing and Charlie says it is a very minor matter of course, M’Clare says There he does not agree.

He says if these tough types caught on their their dear little down and out was really rich it would not stop at personal unpleasantness, the whole relation between the mining and farming communities might well be upset.

I would like to sneer but cannot because it is perfectly true, Dad is pretty rich and has a big effect on local affairs; if the miners think his daughter been slumming around making fools of them no knowing what comes after.

M’Clare says However it should be easy enough to fix things so no one can catch on.

Charlie says it is not so simple, Liz has to be got away where no one will chase after her; fortunately very few people in Town are in a position to recognize her, but where can she go now.

I say Look that is easy give me a job on the farm.

Charlie says Suppose they take a fancy to visit you, you think Buffalo Cole is going to remember you are the hired help came here last Tuesday? That is the one place you can be certain someone will give you away.

Besides just as present they know your name but have not connected it with Farmer Lee. No, Liz we have to get you a job as companion or something to someone here in Town, a respectable woman the miners will keep right away from.

I say Charlie there are maybe three respectable women in Town; if you park me on one all my pals will

come round to make sure I have not hired into a brothel by mistake. How will your lady friend care for that? Charlie says What worries him is where to find a woman anyone could believe had voluntarily saddled herself with a hellcat like me.

M’Clare makes a little cough and Charlie says What does he think?

M’Clare says our solutions are too prosaic and too partial, this is a classic example of the fauntleroy situation and should be worked out as such.

I say What the hell is a fauntleroy?

He says this means a situation in which one younger and apparently weaker person exerts influence over a group of adults by appealing to their protective instincts.

Appeal hell! he says Unintentionally, no doubt. He says the situation can only be properly resolved if the subject appears to be in no further need of protection

against the trouble, whatever it may be, in this case financial.

Charlie says You mean we should tell them Liz has come into money and moved to a hotel?

M’Clare says that again would be only a partial solution, he thinks it would be better if Little Orphan Liz and her sick father were rescued by a Rich Uncle arriving next Wednesday from Earth.

Charlie says Why is Liz short of money if she has a rich uncle ready to assist? M’Clare says he is also a long-lost uncle only recently made his pile and just managed to trace the one remaining relative he has looked for ever since.

I say Why is this better than, he died and left me the cash? He says Money for nothing morally unsatisfactory and a bad ending, this way you give something in return; also your lonely uncle can take you and your father straight off to Earth and leave nothing for anyone to ask questions about.

I do not believe anyone will swallow this hunk of cereal, too convenient all round.

* * *

According to M’Clare that does not matter, it is the right kind of improbably event for this situation. My pals will think it quite right and proper for their little ray of sunshine to be snatched up into unearned affluence and cheer the declining years of her rich relative and bring him together with his estranged brother-in-law; right ending to the situation Statistical probability irrelevant to the workings of Destiny.

Charlie says Where will we find an uncle? He himself is too well known, to hire an actor means going off the planet. M’Clare says as it happens he has to leave the planet this afternoon and will be returning next Wednesday himself.

Charlie says You mean you’d do it? That’s really wonderful what do you say Liz? What I want to say is, I will not have this cultural corkscrew add himself to

my family, but the lemonade tangles in my epiglottis; people have died that way but Do they care?

M’Clare says of course he must get Mr. Lee’s permission for this masquerade, I just thought of that one now I am left with nothing to say except Hellanhokum I ought to be back at the bar.

I do not trust M’Clare one angstrom I could see he was thinking of something else this whole time, probably What interesting opportunities for field work if the whole thing got given away; if Dad is really over his concussion he will put a stopper on the whole thing.

Does he hell!

Charlie takes M’Clare along, never mind visiting hours are over, they spill the whole thing to Dad before the professor catches his ship.

Well I will say they made a job of it. When I go along in the morning absolutely no bites in the furniture, Dad is still weakened of course.

He says Liz, girl, you are as crazy as a kor-calf, you got as much sense as a shortened servo, the moment I take my eyes off you you stir up more trouble than a barrel of hootch on a dry planet. It is a long time since I was surprised at anything you do; here he goes off into ancient history that is not relevant to this affair.

This business, he says, has put the triple tungsten-plated tin top on it, even you must know what could have happened to you going into a place like that, Liz girl how could you do such a thing?

I say Dad I know it was crazy but you have it all wrong, miners may be tough but those types were real good to me.

He says Liz your capacity to fall on your feet is what scares me the worst of all, one of these days the probabilities will catch up with you all in one go. Look at this Professor M’Clare probably the one man in the Universe would know how to get you out of this with no-one catching on, and he turns up here and now.

Well I was all set to get out myself with Charlie helping, but it seems to soothe Dad to think about M’Clare so I let him. That smoothy put himself over all right.

It develops where he has gone is Magnus 9 in the next system to let an examinee loose on some suckers there; he has left a list of instructions with Charlie, and Dad says I am to order myself according to these and not dare to breathe unless so directed.

They are all about what I am to do and say, Charlie stands over me while I learn them by heart, he does not seem to trust me but Hellanall does he think I want to fluff in the middle of a script like this?

* * *

Tuesday evening is when the scene starts, my pals ask What is on my mind they hope my old man is not worse is he?

I say I have had a message from a ship just coming within communicator distance and is landing

tomorrow. I am to meet someone, whose name got scrambled, at the Space Gate at five thirty a.m.; I cannot think who this can be and it worries me a little Dad has so many troubles already.

At this my pals look grim and say If it is debts I can count on them and if it is anything else I can still count on them, I feel ashamed again.

Five thirty is a horrible time to start. I am yawning and chilled through, the night breeze is still up and dust creeping in among the long pylon shadows in little puffed whirlwinds; the three ships down on the field got their hatches down and goods stacked round and look broken and untidy.

First a little black dot in the sky then bigger and bigger covering more and more stars, it does not seem to come nearer but only to spread, then suddenly a great bulging thing with light modeling its under side and right over head, I want to duck.

It swings across a little to the nearst pylons. They jerk and the arms come up with a clang, reaching after the

ship. There is a flash and bang as they make contact just under the gallery where it bulges, then a long slow glide as they fold and she comes down into place like a grasshopper folding its legs.

I find my breath hitched up, I take a deep lungful of cold morning dust and start coughing.

My pals rally around and pat me on the back.

I thought there were only three present but there seem to be more, I cannot see the passengers get off until half are into the Gate, M’clare is not in sight hell did he not see me perhaps he has ditched me.

They speaker system make with a crack like splitting rocks and says Will Miss Lee believed to be somewhere around the Gate come to the manager’s office at once please?

I take another deep breath more carefully.

My pals seem to think it is sinister, I now have seven on the premises and they wish to come too. In the end

they elect Swede and Dogface bodyguards and the rest wait outside.

I cannot remember one single word I ought to say.

In the office is a man in uniform and another one not, I guess I look blank but not as blank as I feel the human face could hardly, how has he done it this time?

It was several seconds before I recognized him at all. He looks older and kind of worn you would guess he had a hardish life and certainly not cultured at all.

I say I was called for, my name is Lee.

He says slowly, Yes, he thinks he would have known me, I am very like my mother, and he calls me Elizabeth.

Every word is clean out of my head, fortunately my pals take over and wish to know how come?

M’Clare looks at them with a frown and says neither of them is James Lee, surely?

I say No they are friends of mine, does he mean he is my mother’s brother because I thought he was dead?

This is not the right place for that the script is gone to Coalsack already.

M’Clare says Yes he really is John M’Clare, he brings out papers to prove it. My friends give them the once over several times and seem to be satisfied, then they want to know sternly Why had he not helped us before?

M’Clare brings out letters from a tracing firm that cover two years and a bit, I will say he is a worker he has vamped all this stuff in three days with other things to do, I suppose Cultural Engineering calls for forgery once in a while.

My pals seem satisfied.

I say Why was he looking for us seeing he and Dad never got along? This is the script as originally laid down.

M’Clare alters the next bit ad lib and I don’t take it in but it goes over with my pals all right, they tell him all about Dad’s accident which they think happened prospecting, and about me and the bar; just then in comes M’Clares acquaintance well to do in business locally meaning Uncle Charlie, apologizing for being late though M’Clare told him how late to be.

My pals shuffle and say Well Miss Lee you will not want us now.

I say what is this Miss Lee stuff you have been calling me Lizzie for weeks. I had to tell them my name or they will call Bubbles or something.

M’Clare says he has a great deal to discuss with his niece and Dad, not to mention Charlie, but he wants to hear all my doings and I will want to tell all my friends; maybe if he calls around to the Royal Arms in the evening they will be there?

They shuffle but seem gratified, they go.

* * *

Charlie sits down and the manager goes and Charlie says *Whew!* I sit down and do not say anything at all.

Well Knotty will be pleased to get rid of me that is one life brightened anyway.

I do not want another day like that one, six hours doing nothing in a hotel. I see Dad about five minutes, he uses up the rest of the visitor's time with M'Clare or Charlie in and me out, then Charlie flies back home to get something or other and I want to go too, I want to go home! I will never come to this town again, I can't anyway until my pals have all left the planet. I wish all this lying were over.

Evening M'Clare and I go out to the bar.

Knotty had a letter from me all about it and of course everyone knows, minute we get inside the door I see everybody is worked up and ready to fight at the drop

of a hint, fauntleroy situation or not if they think my rich uncle is trying to snoot them all the trouble missed during the last fortnight will occur at one go.

Then M’Clare spots Dogface and Swede at the back of the crowd and says Hello, five minutes later it is drinks all round and everything Joblock smooth, I could not have done it better myself.

Then he is making a speech.

It is all about Kindness to dumb creatures meaning me, I do not listen but watch the faces, judging by them he is doing good. I hear the last words something about Now he has found his niece and her father he does not want to lose sight of them and his brother-in-law has consented the whole family goes back to Earth in two days’ time.

It occurs to me suddenly How am I going to get off the ship? They have found some sick cuss wants to get to Earth and will play my Dad ten minutes to get a free passage, but my pals are bound to turn up to see me off how am I to slip away?

Then I stop thinking because Dogface says slowly So this is the end, hey Liz?

And someone else says Well it was good while it lasted.

And I cry, I put my head down on the table among the drinks and cry like hell, because I am deceitful and they are kind to me and I wish I could tell the truth for a change.

Someone pats me on the back and shoves a disposable into my hand, I think it is one of my pals till I smell it; nobody bought this on Excenus! I am so surprised I wad it up and it goes to dust so I have to stop crying right away.

I even manage to say Good-by and I will never forget them. They say they will never forget me.

We say about ten thousand goodbyes and go.

* * *

Next day the hospital say Dad overtired, they have sedated him, seems he was half the night talking to M’Clare and Charlie what the hell were they thinking of to let him? My uncle will call for me. I expect Charlie what I get is M’Clare.

We are to go shopping buying some clothes for me to wear on Earth, it seems to me this is carrying realism too far but I do not want any more time in the hotel with nothing to do.

Fortunately the tailoring clerk does not know me, we have a machine out at the farm; he takes a matrix and slaps up about ten suits and dresses; they will be no use here at all, no place for condensers or canteen I cannot even give them away.

7:07 popsicle break to 7:12

However I am not bothered so much about that, M’Clare is all the time trying to get me to talk, he says for instance Have I ever thought about going to College? I say Sure, I count my blessings now and then.

We are somehow on the topic of education and what teaching have I had so far? I say Usual machines and reels, I want to get off this so I start to talk about Excenus he cannot compete there. I tell him about our manners, customs, morals, finance, farming, geography, geology, mining of areopagite, I am instructive right back to the hotel I hope now he has had enough of it.

In the evening they let me see Dad.

They say You really ought not to be allowed in he has had his quota of visitors today already, I say Who? But need I ask, it was Mr. M’Clare.

The nurse says I am allowed to see Dad because he refuses to go to sleep until he has told me something, but I must be careful not to argue it will retard his recovery if he gets excited again.

Dad is dead white and breathing noisy but full of spirit, the nurse says You may have five minutes and Dad says No-one is rationing his time for him when he is ready he will ring. The nurse is a sturdy six-footer

and Dad is five foot four, they glare it out. Dad wins in the end.

Well I intend to keep it down to five minutes myself, I say Hello Dad what cooks?

He says Lizzie girl what do you think of this M’Clare?

I think quite a number of things but I say He is very clever, I think.

Dad says Sure he is clever, Professor at a big college on Earth gets students from all the planets in the known volume, I been talking to him and he says you have a flair.

I say Huh?

Dad says I have a flair for this cultural engineering business, Professor M’Clare told him so.

I say Well I promised you already I will keep it under control in future.

Dad starts to go red and I say Look two minutes gone already, what did you want to tell me? say it straight, and he says Going to send you to college, girl.

I say What!

Dad says Liz, Excenus is no place for a young girl all her life. Time you seen some other worlds and I cannot leave the farm and got no one have an eye to you, now M’Clare says he will get you into this College and that is just what I need.

I say But—!

Dad says They got schools on Earth for kids like you, been on an outback planet or education restricted other ways, they are called Prelim schools; well you got the Rudiments already; M’Clare says after three months Prelim you should be fit to get into Russet College of Humanities, he will act as your official guardian while on Earth. Do not argue with me Liz!

The nurse comes back and says I must go in thirty seconds not more, Dad is gray in the face and looks fit

to come to pieces, I say All right Dad of course you know best.

He says Kiss me Lizzie, and good-by.

Then the nurse chases me Out.

* * *

This is M’Clare’s doing playing on Dad when he is mixed in the head, he knows damned well this thing is impossible if he were only in his right mind. I go tearing back to the hotel to look for M’Clare.

I find he is out.

I sit there seething one four twenty-seven minutes until he comes in. I say I have to speak to him right now.

I do not know if he is looking bored or amused but it is an expression that should be wiped off with a rag, he says Certainly, can it wait till we reach his room?

We get there and I say Look what is this nonsense you have talked Dad into about taking me to some college on Earth or something? Because it is straight out crazy and if Dad were right in the head he would know.

M’Clare sits down and says, “Really, Lysistrata, what a spoiled young woman you are.”

Who the hell told him, that name is the one thing I really do hold against Dad.

M’Clare goes on that he did not understand at first why my father refused to have me told about the scheme until it was all fixed, but he evidently knew the best way to avoid a lot of fuss.

I say I am not going to leave Excenus.

M’Clare says I cannot possibly avoid leaving Excenus I have got to go on the ship tomorrow haven’t I?

I say then they can send me back by lifeship, he says it is far too late to arrange that now.

He says he officially my guardian from the moment we leave the planet and he cannot allow me to travel alone, reason for all this rush is so he can see me to College himself, What is the matter with me don't I want to see the World anyway?

Sure, some time, but I don't have to go to College for that.

M'Clare says that is my mistake, Earth had such a rush of sight-seers from the Out Planets entrance not permitted any more except on business, only way I can get there is as a student except I might marry an Earthman some day. I say Hell I would rather go to College than that.

Just the same when I have had enough of it I am coming straight back home.

M'Clare says I will do no such thing.

Great whirling nebulae he cannot keep me on Earth if I want to go!he says Pn the contrary he has no power to do anything else, my father appointed him my

guardian on condition I was to do a four-year course at Russet. Of course if I am determined to return to Excenus home and Dad rather than make the effort to adjust myself to an environment where I have not got everyone secretly under my thumb there is an easy way out, I have to take a Prelim test in three months and if I fail to make it no power on Earth could get me into Russet, and he would have to send me back home.

We have to start early in the morning so Good night.

I go to my room, if there was anything I could bite holes in that is what I would do.

I will pass that exam if it takes twenty-eight hours a day, no this is to be on Earth well all the time that they have; I will get into M’Clane’s class and make him Sorry he interfered with me.

What does he think I am? Dad too, he would have sent me to school long ago except we both knew I would never make the grade.

I am the next thing to illiterate, that’s why.

Oh, I can read in a way, I can pick up one word after another as they come up in the machine, but I cannot use it right; Dad is the same.

Dad used to think it was because he learned to use it too late, then when I was old enough to learn he found I was the same, some kink in the genes I suppose. Both of us, we cannot read with the machine any faster than an old-style book.

I did not know this was wrong until I was eleven. Dad hid the booklet came with the machine then one day I found it, part of it says like this:

“It has sometimes been suggested that the reading rate should be used as a measure of general intelligence. This is fallacious. The rate at which information can be absorbed, and therfore the rate at which words move across the viewer, is broadly correlated with some aspects of intelligence, but not with all. Mathematicians of genius tend to read slower than average, and so do some creative artists.

All that can safely be said that people of normal intelligence have reading rates somewhere above five thousand and that it is exceptional for anyone to pass the ten thousand mark; the few who do are usually people of genius in a narrowly specialized field."

My reading rate is so low the dial does not show, I work out with a stop watch it is eight hundred or thereabouts.

I go and ask Dad; it is the first time he let me see him feeling bad, it is all he can do to talk about it all all, he keeps telling me it is not so bad really he got on all right and he cannot read properly any more than me; he shows me those old books of his all over again.

After this we do not talk about it and I do not want to talk about it now. Not to anyone at all.

That is the longest night I remember in my life, nineteen years of it.

* * *

In the morning we got to the Gate. My pals are there seeing me off, I do not cry because I have just found something makes me so mad I am just waiting to get in the ship and say what I think to M’Clare.

Then we go into the ship.

I cannot say anything now we have to strap in for takeoff. The feeling is like being in a swing stopped at the top of its beat. I cannot help waiting for it to come down, but after a bit I grasp we are up to stay and get unhitched.

In the corridor is a crewman, he says Hello miss not sick? I say Ought I to be?

He asks am I an old traveler? When I say First time up he makes clicking noises like I am clever or lucky or both.

We are getting acquainted when I feel eyes on my backbone and there is M’Clare.

M’Clare says Hello, Lizzie, not sick?

I say I do not have to pretend he is my uncle any more and I prefer to be called Miss Lee, I will not have a person like him calling me Lizzie or in fact anything else, as of now we are not speaking any more.

He raises an eyebrow and says Dear him. I start to go but he hooks a hand round my arm and says What is all this about?

I say I have been talking to that poor sucker come out of hospital and pretending to be my Dad. He is a heart case and thinks he will be cured when he gets to Earth able to get around like anyone else, I know if he could be cured on Earth he could be cured on Excenus just as well, he will simply have to go on lying in bed and not even anyone he knows around, it is the dirtiest trick I ever knew.

Well he is not smiling now any way.

He asks have I told the man he will not be cured I say What does he take me for?

He says I could answer that but I won’t. You are quite right in thinking that it would do very little good to take a man with a diseased heart to Earth, but as it happens he will not be going there at all.

Close to Earth, M’Clare goes on, there is a body on the Moon with approximately one-eighth the gravitational pull, there is a big sanatorium on it for men like this one, the rare case not curable by operation or drugs: and if he cannot live a quite normal life he will at least be able to get out of bed and probably some sort of job, this has been explained to him and he seems to think it good enough.

Sweet spirits of sawdust I have heard of that sanatorium before, why does the deck not open and swallow me up.

I say I am sorry, M’Clare says Why?

I say I am sorry I spoke without making sure of the facts.

I do not beg his pardon because I would not have it on a plate.

M’Clare says my uncle gave him a letter to deliver to me when the ship was under way, he shoves it in my hand and goes away.

It is written with Dad’s styler, he fell on it during the accident and the L went wobbly, what it says is this.

—

Dear Liz,

About this college, I know you said I know best but did not mean it at all, just the same I reckon I do. You got to look at it another way. When they got the readers out at my old school and found I could not use them they reckoned I was no good for learning, but they were wrong. There is more to being educated than just books or you could sit and read them at home.

You and I are handicapped same way so we have to use our heads to get over it. All that is in books came out of somebody’s head, well you and I just got to use our own instead of other people’s. Of course there is facts but a lot of books use the same facts over and over, I found that when I started to study.

There is another thing for you, they told me at school I would never be any good for studying but I reckon I did all right.

It is high time you saw some other worlds than this one but I would not send you to College if I did not think you could get through. M’Clare says you have this Flair. We will look forward to seeing you for years from now, don’t forget to write. Your loving father, J. X. Lee. PS. I got a list of books you will want for Prelim School and Charlie had Information Store copy them, they are in your cabin.

J. X. Lee.

—

Poor old Dad.

Well I suppose I better give it a try, and what's more I better get on with it.

There are reels in my cabin, a whole box of them it will take me a year to get through, the sooner the quicker I suppose.

I jam one in and sit down in the machine put on the blinkers and turn the switch.

There is the usual warmup, the words slide on slow at first then quicker then the thing goes *click* and settles down, the lines glide across just fast enough to keep pace with my eyes. I have picked myself something on Terrestrial Biology and Evoluion, I realize suddenly I will be among it in a couple of weeks, lions and elephants and kangaroos; well I cannot stop to think now I have to beat that exam.

Most of those weeks I study like a drain.

They have cut day-length in the ship to twenty-four hours already, I have difficulty sleeping at first but I adjust in the end. Between readings I mooch round and talk to the crew, I am careful not to be the little ray of sunshine but we get on all right. I go and see the man with the sick heart a few times, he wants to know all about the Moon so I read up and relay as well as I can.

It sounds dull to me but compared to lying in bed I can see it is high-voltage thrill.

He thanks me every day for the whole voyage, I keep saying we only did it because we wanted someone to impersonate Dad. I think there ought to be ways for people like him to get enough money to go to the Moon how can you earn it lying in bed? he agrees with this but does not get ideas very much. I think I will write about it to Dad.

We stop at the Moon to put him down but no time to look round, M’Clare had to be back at Russett day before yesterday, I suppose he lost time picking me up; well I did not ask him to.

Dropping to Earth I am allowed maybe half a second in the control-room to look at the screen, I say What is all that white stuff? they say It is raining down there.

More than half of what I see is water and more coming down!

When the Earthbound ask what interests me most on Earth I say All that water and nothing to pay; they do not know what it means getting water out of near-dry air, condensing breath out of doors, humidity suit to save sweat on a long haul: first time on Earth I go for a walk I get thirsty and nearly panic, on Excenus that would mean canteen given out rush fast for the nearest house.

They told me it was raining; all the same when we walk out of the ship I think at first they are washing the field from up above, I stand there with my mouth open to see; fortunately M’Clare is not looking and I come to quite soon.

Seems all this water has drawbacks too, round here they have to carry rainproofing instead of canteens.

I spend three days seeing sights and never turn on a book.

* * *

Prelim school.

Worst is, I do not have a reader of my own now, only reading rooms and I have to keep it private that I read more than two hours a day or someone will catch on and I will be Out before I have a chance to try if what Dad says will work out.

There is more to teaching than books for one thing Class Debates, these are new to me of course but so they are to the others and these I can take. Man to man with my tutor at least I can make him laugh, he says The rugged unpunctuated simplicity of my style of writing is not suited to academic topics even when leavened with polysyllables end of quote, but it is all these books are getting me down.

Pause 8:26, contineu 9:41

In the end I get a system, I read the longest reel on each topic and then the other one the author doesn't like, that way I get both sides to the question.

Three months and the exam; afterwards I keep remembering all the things I should have said till I take a twenty-four hour pill and go to bed till the marking is over.

I wake up and comes a little blue ticket to say I am Through, please report to Russett College in three days for term to begin.

Well, what am I grinning about?

All this means is four years more of the same and M'Clare too added on.

It comes to me as a notion I may not get through Russett term without telling M'Clare all about himself, so I get round and see as much of Earth as I can; more variety than at home.

So then three days are up and here I am in Russett entrance hall with more people than I ever saw in my life at one time.

These are the speaker mechs which are such a feature of Terrestrial life all around the room. One starts up in the usual muted roar like a spacer at a funeral, it says All students for Cultural Engineering Year One gather round please.

This means me.

Cultural Engineering is not a big department, only fifty of us coagulated round this mech but like I said they come in all kinds, there is one I see projecting above the throng so brunet he is nearly purple, not just the hair but all over. What is the matter with him looks like the longest streak of sorrow I ever did see.

Well there are other ways to get pushed into this place than through basic urges thalamic or otherwise, just look at me.

The mech starts again and we are all hanging on what drops from its diaphragm, it says we are to File along corridor G to Room 31 alpha and there take the desk allotted by the monitor and no other.

This we do; even by Terrie standards it is a long hike for indoors.

* * *

I wonder what is a monitor, one of those mechs without which the Earthbound cannot tell which way is tomorrow? Then we are stopped and sounds of argument float back from ahead.

That settles it, Terries do not argue with mechs and I am conditioned already, it is a way to get no place at all; there is someone human dealing with the line.

We go forward in little jerks till I can hear, it is one of those Terrie voices always sound like they are done on purpose to me.

We came round the corner to a door and I can see this Monitor is indeed human or at least so classified.

Here we go, it is only me this could happen to.

Each person says a name and the monitor repeats it to the kind of box he carries and this lights up with figures on it. I wonder why the box needs a human along and then I remember, one hundred twenty four different planets and accidents to match, I guess this is one point where Man can be a real help to Machine.

I am glad I saw him before he saw me: I tell him Lee, L. and he looks at me in a bored way and then does a double take and drops the thing.

I pick it up and say Lee, L. in cultivated tones, it lights up just the same, Q8 which means the desk where I have to sit.

The desks are in pairs. When I track Q8 to its lair Q7 is empty, I sit and wonder what the gremlins will send me by way of partner.

I do not wait long. Here she comes, tall and dark and looksl ike she had brains right down her spinal column, she will have one of those done-on-purpose voices in which I will hear much good advice when the ice breaks in a month or so. Brother this is no place for me.

She looks straight past my shoulder and does not utter while she is sitting down.

I cannot see her badge which is on the other side. She has what looks to me like a genuine imitation kor-hide pouch and is taking styler and block out of it, then she looks at me sideways and suddenly lights all over with a grin like Uncle Charlie's saying as follows, "Why, are you Lizzie Lee?"

I do not switch reactions fast enough, I hear my voice say coldly that my name is Lee, certainly.

She looks like she stubbed her toe. I realize suddenly she is just a kid, maybe a year younger than I am, and feeling sky. I say quick that I make people call me Lizzie because my real name is too awful to mention.

She lights up again and says So is hers, let us found a society for the Prevention of Parents or something.

Her brooch says B Laydon, she says her first name will not even abbreviate so people here get to call her just B.

I am just round to wondering where she heard my name when she says That stuffed singlet in the doorway is of course her big brother Douglas and she has been wanting to meet me ever since.

Here Big Brother Douglas puts the box under his arm and fades gently away, the big doors behind the rostrum slide open and the clock turns to fourteen hours and Drums and Trumpets here comes Mr. M’Clare.

B Laydon whispers I think Professor M’Clare is wonderful do not you?

Brother.

I know M’Clare is going to deliver the Opening Address of the Year to Cultural Engineering students, it is my guess all such come out of the same can so I take time off for some thought.

Mostly I am trying to decide what to do. Prelim school was tough enough, so this will be tough^2, is it worth going through just to show M’Clare I can do it?

Sure it is but can I?

I go on thinking these lines, such as what Dad will say if I want to give it up; I just about decided all I can do is wait and see when suddenly it is Time up, clock shows 15.00 hours exactly just as the last word is spoken and Exit M’Clare.

Some thing I will say.

I look round and all the faces suggest I should maybe have listened after all.

B Laydon is wrapt like a parcel or something, then she catches me looking at her and wriggles slightly.

She says We have been allotted rooms together, sharing a study, do I mind it?

I assume this is because we come together in the alphabet and say Why should I?

She says Well. On the form it said Put down anyone you should like to room with and she wrote Miss Lee.

I ask did she do this because mine was the only name she knew or does she always do the opposite of what Big Brother Douglas tells her, she answers Both.

O.K. by me anyway.

Our rooms are halfway up the center tower, when we find them first thing I see is a little ticket in the delivery slot says Miss Lee call on Professor M’Clare at fifteen thirty please.

Guardian or no I have seen him not more than twice since landing which means not more than twice too often; still I go along ready to be polite.

* * *

He lets me sit opposite and looks thoughtful in a way I do not care for.

He says “Well, Miss Lee, you passed your qualifying exam.”

I say Yes because this is true.

He says, it was a very economical performance exceeding the minimum level by two marks exactly.

Hells bells I did not know that, marks are not published, but I swallow hard and try to look as though I meant it that way.

M’Clare says the Admission Board are reluctant to take students who come so close to the borderline but they decided after some hesitation to accept me, as my Prelim Tutor considered that once I settled down as a student and made up my mind to do a little work I should get up to standard easily enough.

He says However from now on it is up to me, I will be examined on this term’s work in twelve weeks’ time and am expected to get at least ten per cent above pass level which cannot be done by neglecting most of the work set, from now on there are no textbooks to rely on.

He presents these facts for my consideration. Good afternoon.

I swagger out feeling lower than sea level.

It is no use feeling sore, I took a lot of trouble to hide the fact that I did a lot of work for that exam, but I feel sore just the same.

The thing I want to do most is get one hundred percent marks in everything just to show him, I got a feeling this is exactly how he meant me to react, because the more I think about it the more sure I am very few things happen by accident around M’Clare.

Take rooming, for instance.

I find very quickly that most people taking Cultural Engineering have not got the partners they put in for, this makes me wonder why B got what she wanted, meaning me.

Naturally the first thing I think of is she has been elected Good Influence, this makes me pretty cagey of course but after a day or two I see I must think again.

B always says she does not *look* for trouble. This may be true, she is very absent-minded and at first I get the idea she just gets into a scrape through having her mind on something else at the time, but later I find she has Principals and these are at the back of it.

First time I hear about these is three nights after Opening, there is a knock at my bedroom window at maybe three hours. I am not properly awake and do not think to question how somebody can be there, seeing it is five hundred feet up the tower; I open the window and B falls inside.

I am just about ready to conclude I must be dreaming when B unstraps a small antigrav pack,

mountaineering type, and says Somebody offered her the beastly thing as a secondhand bargain, she has been trying it out and it doesn’t work.

Of course an antigrav cannot fail altogether. If the space-warp section could break down they would not be used for building the way they are. What has gone wrong is the phase-tuning arrangement and the thing can be either right on or right off but nothing in between.

B says she stepped off the top of the tower maybe an hour ago and got stuck straight away. She stepped a little too hard and got out of reach of the tower parapet. She only picked that night for it because there was no wind, so she had no chance of being blown back again. She just had to turn the antigrav off, a snatch at a tie, and drop little by little until the slope of the tower caught up with her. Then she went on turning it snap on and snap off and kind of slithering down the stonework until she got to about the right floor, and then she had to claw halfway round the building.

B says she was just going to tap at the window above mine and then she saw that frightful Neo-Pueblo statue Old Groucho is so proud of, then she came one farther down and found me but I certainly take plenty of waking.

Well I am wide awake now and I speak to her severely.

* * *

I say it is her career, her neck, neither of them mine, but she knows as well as I do that jumping off the tower is the one thing in this University is utterly forbidden and no Ifs.

B says That’s just because some idiots tried to jump in a high wind and got blown into the stonework.

I say Be that as it may if she had waked up Old Groucho — Professor of Interpenetration Mechanics ninety last week — she would have been expelled straight away, I add further she knows best if it would be worth it.

B says she is a practicing Pragmatist.

This turns out to mean she belongs to a bunch who say Rules are made mostly for conditions that exist only a little bit of the time, e.g. this one about the tower, B is quite right that it is not dangerous except in a high wind — not if you have an antigrav I mean.

B says Pragmatists lead a Full Life because they have to make up their own minds when rules really apply and act accordingly, she says you do not lead a Full Life if you obey a lot of regulations when they are not necessary and it is a Principal of Pragmatism not to do this.

B says further it is because Terries go on and on about obeying regulations unnecessarily that Outsiders think they are Sissy.

I say Huh?

B says it is not her fault she never had any proper adventures.

I remark If her idea of an adventure is to get hauled in front of the Dean why did she not go ahead and wake up Old Groucho instead of me?

B says the adventure is just taking the risk, everybody ought to take some risks now and then and breaking rules is the only one available just now.

This causes me to gawp quite a bit, because Earth seems to me maybe fifteen times as dangerous as any planet I heard of so far.

There are risks on all planets, but mostly life is organized to avoid them. Like back home, the big risk is to get caught without water; there is only about one chance in one thousand for that to happen, but everybody wears humidity suits just the same.

On Earth you get a sample of about all the risks there are, mountains and deserts and floods and the sea and wild animals and poisons, now it occurs to me Terries could get rid of most of them if they really cared to try, but their idea of a nice vacation is to take as many as possible just for fun.

Well later on it occurs to me I should never have understood this about Terries but for talking to B, and I look round and find a lot of the Terries got paired up with Outsiders for roomates and maybe this is why.

I say to B some of what I think about risks and it cheers her up for a moment, but she goes on getting into trouble on Pragmatic Principals just the same.

Me, I am in trouble too but not on principal.

* * *

The work at first turned out not so bad as I expected, which is not to say it was good.

Each week we have a different Director of Studies and we study a different Topic, with lectures and stereos and visits to museums and of course we read Books.

Further we have what are called Class Debates, kind of an argument with only one person speaking at a time and the Director to referee.

Terries say this last is kid stuff, the Outsiders met it mostly in Prelim School if then so they really study hard so as to do good. Next thing you know the Terries are outclassed and trying hard to catch up, so a strenuous time is had by all, I begin to see there is a real thing between the two groups though no one likes to mention it out loud.

Class Debates I do not mind, I been used to arguing with Dad all my life, what gets me is Essays. We do one each week to sum up, and all my sums come wrong.

Reason for this is we get about fifteen books to read every week and are not allowed more than three hours a day with a reading machine, this is plenty for most people but I only get through a quarter of the stuff.

If you only know a quarter of the relevant facts you get things cockeyed and I can find no way around this.

My first essay comes back marked Some original ideas but more reference to actual examples needed, style wants polishing up.

The second has Original!! but what about the FACTS style needs toning down.

More of the same.

After three weeks I am about ready to declare; then I find out B gets assorted beefs written on her essays too and takes it for granted everybody does, she says Teachers always tell you what you do wrong not what you do right, this is Education.

I stick it some more.

I will say it is interesting all right. We are studying Influences on Cultural Trends, of which there are plenty some obvious some not.

Most of the class are looking forward to becoming Influences themselves, we have not been taught how to do this yet but everyone figures that comes next. It

seems to me though that whatever you call it it comes down to pushing people around when they are not looking, and this is something I do not approve of more than halfway.

There is just one person in the class besides me does not seem to feel certain all is for the best. This is the dark fellow I noticed on Opening day, six foot six built like a pencil. His name is Likofo Komom'baraze and he is a genuine African; they are rare at Russett because Africans look down on Applied studies, preferring everything Pure. Most of them study Mathematics and Literature and so on at their own universities or the Sorbonne or somewhere, seems he is the first ever to take Cultural Engineering and not so sure he likes it.

There is a bond between us and we become friendly in a kind of way, I find he is not so unhappy as he looks but Africans are proverbially melancholy according to B.

I say to Komo one time that I am worried about the exams, he looks astonished and says But, Lizzie, you

are so clever! turns out he thinks this because the things I say in class debates do not some out of any book he knows of, but it is encouraging just the same.

I need the encouragement.

Seventh week of term the Director of Studies is M’Clare.

Maybe it makes not so much difference, but that week I do everything wrong. To start with I manage to put in twice the legitimate time reading for several days, I get through seven books and addle myself thoroughly. In Debates I cannot so much as open my mouth, I am thinking about that Essay all the time, I sit up nights writing it and then tear the stuff up. In the end I guess I just join up bits that I remember out of books and pass that in.

B thinks my behavior odd, but she has caught on now I do not regard M’Clare as the most wonderful thing that ever happened.

* * *

The last debate of the week comes after essays have been handed in, I try to pay attention but I am too tired. I notice Komo is trying to say something and stuttering quite a bit, but I do not take in what it is about.

Next day I run into Komo after breakfast and he says Lizzie why were you so silent all the week?

What we studied this time was various pieces of Terrie history where someone deliberately set out to shape things according to his own ideas, I begin to see why Komo is somewhat peeved with me.

Komo says, “Everybody concentrated on the practicability of the *modus operandi* employed, without considering the ethical aspects of the matter. I think it is at least debatable whether any individual has the right to try and determine the course of evolution of a society, most of the members of which are ignorant of his intentions. I hoped that the discussion would clear my mind, but nobody mentioned this side of it except me.”

I know why Komo is worried about this, his old man is a Tartar by all accounts has the idea he wants to re-establish a tribal society in Africa like they had five hundred years ago; this is why he send Komo to study at Russett and Komo is only half sold on the idea.

I say “Listen Komo, this is only the first term and as far as I can see M’Clare is only warming up, we have not got to the real stuff at all yet. I think we shall be able to judge it better when we know more about it, also maybe some of the stuff later in the course might be real helpful if you have to argue with your Dad.”

Komo slowly brightens and says “Yes, you are a wise girl, Lizzie Lee.”

11:23 lunch break 12:01 blehghg

Here we meet B and some others and conversation broadens, a minute later someone comes along with a little ticket saying Miss Lee see Professor M’Clane at 11.30 hours please.

Wise girl, huh?

Komo is still brooding on Ethics and the conversation has got on to Free Will, I listen a bit and then say, “Listen folks, where did you hatch? you do what you can and what you can’t you don’t, what is not set by your genes is limited by your environment let alone we were not the first to think of pushing people around, where does the freedom come in?”

They gape and B says Oh but Lizzie, don’t you remember what M’Clare said on Opening Day?

This remark I am tired of, it seems M’Clare put the whole course into that one hour or so Why we go on studying I do not know.

I say No I did not listen and I am tired of hearing that sentence, did nobody write the lecture down?

B gasps and says there is a recording in the library.

* * *

It was quite a speech, I will say.

There is quite a bit about free will. M’Clare says Anyone who feels they have a right to fiddle with other people’s lives has no business at Russett. But there is no such thing as absolute freedom, it is a contradiction in terms. Even when you do what you want, your wants are determined by your mental make up and previous experience. If you do nothing and want nothing, that is not freedom of will, but freedom from will, no will.

But, he says, all the time we are making choices, some known and some not: the more you look the more you see this. Quote, “It has probably not occurred to you that there is an alternative to sitting here until the hour strikes, and yet the forces that prevent you from walking out are probably not insurmountable. I say ‘Probably’ because a cultural inhibition can be as absolute as a physical impossibility. Whatever we do means submitting to one set of forces and resisting others. Those of you who are listening are obeying the forces of courtesy, interest or the hope that I may say something useful in examinations, and resisting the forces that draw

your minds on to other things. Some of you may have made the opposite choice. The more we consider our doings the more choices we see, and the more we see the better hope we have of understanding human affairs.”

Here are examples how people often do not make the choice they would really prefer, they are got at for being sissy or something. Or social institutions get in the way even when everyone knows what should be done, Hard cases make bad law and Bad law makes hard cases too. M’Clare says also You are always free to resist your environment, but to do so limits all your choices afterwards, this comes to Make environments so they do not have to be resisted.

There is lots more but this bit has something to do with me, though you may not think so yet.

If I have any choices now, well I can throw my hand in or try to work something out; all I can think of is telling M’Clare how I cannot use a reading machine.

I m not so sure that is a choice, when he said Inhibitions can be absolute, Brother no fooling that is perfectly true.

Right now I can choose to sit here and do nothing or go and get some work done, there is a Balance of forces over that but then I go along to a Reading Room.

I have a long list of books I ought to have read, I just take the first, dial for it and fit it in the machine.

I think, now I can choose to concentrate or I can let my mind go off on this mess I got into it and What Dad is going to say, no one in their senses would choose that last one. I set my chronoscope for twenty past eleven and put the blinkers on.

I switch the machine on, it lights and starts to go.

Then it goes crazy.

What should have warned me, there is no click. There is the usual warm up, slow then faster, but instead of

a little jump and then ordinary speed it gets faster and faster and before I realize it I am caught.

It is like being stuck in concrete except this is inside of me, inside my head, and growing, it spreads and pushes, it is too big for my skill it is going to *burst*

and then I have let out a most almighty yell and torn out of the thing, I find later I left a bit of hair in the blinkers but I am out of it.

[linebreak?]

There is no one around, I run as though that machine had legs to come after me, I run right out in the campus and nearly crash with a tree, then I put my back to it and start breathing again.

Whatever I have done until now, judging by the feel of my rbs breathing was no part of it.

After a bit I sit down, I still have my back to the tree, I leave thinking till later and just sit.

Then I jump up and yell again.

I have left that crazy machine to itself, someone may sit in it this minute and get driven clean out of their head.

I run back not quite so fast as I came and burst in, someone just sitting down I yell out loud and yank him out of it.

It is a Third Year I do not know, from another class, he is much astonished by me.

I explain.

I guess I make it dramatic, he looks quite scared, meanwhile a small crowd has gathered around the door.

Along comes Doc Beschrievene expert at this kind of machine to see Why breach of the rule of silence in this block.

He trots straight in and starts inspecting the chair, then he says Exactly what happened, Miss Lee?

I say My God I have to see Mr. M’Clare!

I have been scratching my wrist for minutes, I now find the alarm of my chronoscope is trying to make itself felt, once again I am breaking records away from there.

I arrive one minute later but M’Clare has a visitor already so I can even get my breath, I also catch up on my apprehensions about this interview; seem to me the choice is get slung out as a slacker or get slung out as moron and I truly do not know which one I care for less.

Then the visitor goes and I stumble in.

M’Clare has a kind of unusual look, his eyes have gone flat and a little way back behind the lids, I do not get it at first then I suddenly see he is very tired.

However his voice is just as usual, not angry but maybe a little tired too, he says, “Well, Miss Lee, they say actions speak louder than words, and you certainly have given us a demonstration; you’ve made it quite clear that you couldd o the work but you aren’t going to, and while it would be interesting to see if you could gauge the requirements of the examiners so exactly this time I don’t think it would justify the time taken to mark your papers. What do you want to do? Go back to Excenus straight away or take a vacation first?”

I simply do not have anything to say, I feel I have been wrapped and sealed and stuck in the deliver hatch, he goes on, “It’s a pity, I think. I thought when I first saw you there was a brain under that golden mop and it was a pity to let it go to waste. If only there were something that mattered more to you than the idea of being made to do what you don’t want to—”

It is queer to watch someone get a call on a built-in phone, some do a sort of twitch some shut their eyes, M’Clare just lets the focus of his side out through the wall and I might not be there any more, I wish I was not but I have to say something before I go away.

M’Clare has been using a throat mike but now he says out loud, “Yes, come over right away.”

[Linebreak?]

Now he is not tired any more.

He says “What happened to the reading machine, Miss Lee?”

I say “It went crazy.” Then I see this is kid’s talk, but I have no time to put learned words into it, I say “Look. You know how it starts? There is a sort of warm up and then a little click and it settles down to the right speed? Well it did not happen. What I think, the governor must have been off or something, but that is not all—it got quicker and quicker but it did something else—look I have not the right expression

for it, but it felt like something opened my skull and pasting things on the convolutions inside.”

He has a look of wild something, maybe surprise maybe just exasperation, then Doc Beschrievene comes in.

He says “Miss Lee, if it was a joke, may we call it off? Readers are in short supply.”

I say if I wanted to make a joke I would make it a funny one.

M’Clare says, “Ask Miss Lee to tell you what happens when you start the reader.

Beschrievene says, “I have started it! I connected it up and it worked quite normally.”

Now the thing has gone into hiding, it will jump out on someone else like it did on me, I have no time to say this; M’Clare says “Tell Dr. Beschrievene about the reader.”

I say “It started to go too fast and then—”

He says Start at the beginning and tell what I told before.

I say “When you sit in a reader there is normally an initial period during which the movement of the words becomes more rapid, then there is a short transitional period of confusion and then the thing clicks audibly and the movement of the words proceeds at a set rate, this time—”

Here Doc gives a yell just like me and jumps to his feet.

M’Clare says What was I reading in the machine?

I do not see what that has to do with it but I tell him, then he wants to know what I remember of it and where it stopped.

I would not have thought I remembered but I do, I know just where it had go to, he takes me backwards bit by bit—

Then I begin to catch on.

M’Clare says “What is your usual reading rate, Liz?”

I swallow hard, I say “Too low to show on the dial, I don’t know.”

He says “Is your father handicapped too?”

I lift my head again, I am going to say that is not his business, then I say Yes instead.

He says “And he feels badly about it? Yes, he would. And you never told anybody. Of course not!” I do not know if it is scorn or anger or what. Beschrievene is talking to him in a language I do not know, M’Clare says Come along to the reading room.

[linebreak?]

The chair has its back off, M’Clare plugs in a little meter lying on the floor and says “Sit down, Liz.”

There is nothing I want less than to sit in that chair, but I do.

M’Clare says, “Whether or not you have a repetition of your previous experience is entirely up to you. Switch it on.”

I am annoyed at his tone, I think I will give that switch a good bang, I feel I have done it too.

But the light does not go on.

M’Clare says patiently, “Turn on, please, Miss Lee.”

I say “You do it.”

Beschrievene says, “Wait! There is no need to demonstrate, after all. We know what happened.”

Then M’Clare’s fingers brush over mine and turn the switch.

I jump all over, the thing warms up and then click! there is the little jump and the words move steadily through.

And you know, I am disappointed.

Beschrievene says He will be the son of a bigamist, I jump out of the chair and demand to know what goes?

M’Clare is looking at a dial in the meter, he turns and looks at me with exactly the same expression and says, “Would you like to repeat your previous experience?”

Beschrievene says, “No!”

I say, “Yes. I would.”

M’Clare bends and does something inside the machine, then he says again, “Sit down, Lizzie Lee.”

I do. I hit the switch myself too.

There it is again, words slide across slow and then quicker and quicker and there is something pressing on my brain, then there is a bang and it all goes off and Beschrievene is talking angry and foreign to M’Clare.

I climb out and say Will they kindly explain.

M’Clare tells me to come and look, it is the reading-rate dial of the machine it now says Seven thousand five hundred and three.

Beschrievene says How much do I know about the machine? seems to me the safest answer is Nothing at all.

He says, “There is an attachment which regulates the speed of movement of the words according to the reaction of the user. It sets itself automatically and registers on this dial here. But there is also another part of the machine far more important although there is no dial for it, unless you fit a test-meter as we have done: this is called the concentration unit or Crammer.”

I did know that, it is what makes people able to read faster than with an old-style book.

He says, “This unit is compulsive. When the machines were first made it was thought that they might be misused to insert hypnotic commands into the minds of readers. It would be very difficult, but perhaps possible. Therefore in the design was incorporated a safety device.” He pats one individual piece of spaghetti for me to admire.

He says, “This device automatically shuts off the machine when it encounters certain cortical wave-patterns which correspond to strong resistance, such as is called forth by hypnotically imposed orders; not merely the resistance of a wandering mind.”

I say But—

He looks as though I suddenly started sprouting and says “M’Clare this is most strange, this very young girl to be so strong, and from childhood too! Looks are nothing, of course—”

M’Clare says “Exactly so. Do you understand, Miss Lee? One of your outstanding characteristics is a dislike of being what you call pushed around, in fact I believe if somebody tried to force you to carry out your dearest wish you would resist with all your might, you are not so set on free will as you are free won’t. The Crammer appeared to your subconscious as something that interfered with your personal freedom, so you resisted it. That isn’t uncommon, at first, but not so many people resist hard enough to turn the thing off.”

I say “But it worked!”

Beschrievene says that the safety device only turns off the Crammer, the rest of the machine goes on working but only at the rate for unassisted reading about one tenth normal rate.

M’Clare says, “You, my girl, have been trying to keep up with a course designed for people who could absorb information seven or eight times as fast. No wonder your knowledge seemed a bit sketchy.”

He sounds angry.

Well hells bells I am angry myself, if only I had told somebody it could all have been put right at the start, or if only the man who first tried to teach Dad the reader had known what was wrong with the way he used it, Dad would have had ordinary schooling and maybe not gone into prospecting but something else, and—

Then whoever got born it would not have been me, so where does that get you?

[linebreak?]

Beschrievene is saying, “What I do not understand, why did she suddenly stop resisting the machine?”

M’Clare says Well Liz?

It is a little time before I see the answer to that, then I say “We cannot resist everything we can only choose the forces to which we will submit.”

They look blank, M’Clare says Is it a quotation?

I say “Your speech on Opening Day, I did not listen. I heard it just now.”

This I never thought to see, his classical puss goes red all over and he does not know what to say.

Beschrievene wants to know more of what was said so I recite, at the end he says “Words! Your students frighten me, M’Clare. So much power in words, at the right time, and you are training them to use such tools so young! To use them perhaps on a whole planet!”

M’Clare says “Would you rather leave it to chance? Or to people with good intentions and no training at all? Or to professional ax-grinders and amateurs on the make?”

I say How do I stop doing it?

Beschrievene rubs his chin and says I will have to start slowly, the machine produced so much effect

because it was going fast, normally children learn to read at five when their reading rate is low even with the Crammer. He says he will take out the safety but put in something to limit speed and I can have a short session tomorrow.

I say Exams in four weeks three days why not today?

He laughs and says Of course I will be excused the exam—

M’Clare says Certainly I will take the exam, there is no reason why I should not pull up to pass standard; work is not heavy this term.

Beschrievene looks under his eyebrows but says Very Well,

[Linebreak?]

After lunch I sit down in the doctored machine.

Five minutes later I am sick.

Beschrievene fusses and gives me anti-nauseant and makes me lie down one half hour and then I start again.

I last twenty minutes and come out head aching fit to grind a hole, I say For all sakes run it full speed it is this push and drag together turns me up, this morning it only scared me.

He does not want to do this, I try all out to persuade him, I am getting set to weep tears when he says Very well, he is no longer surprised my will was strong enough to turn off the machine.

This time it comes full on.

The words slide across my eyes slow, then quicker, then suddenly they are running like water pouring through my eyes to my brain, something has hold of me keeping my mind open so that they can get in, if I struggle if I stop one microsecond from absolute concentration they will jam and something will *break*.

I could not pull any of my mind away to think with but there is a little corner of it free, watching my body, it makes my breath go on, digs my nails in my hand, stops the muscles of my legs when they try to jerk me out of the chair, sets others to push me back again.

I can hear my breath panting and the bang of my heart, then I do not hear it any longer, I am not separate any longer from the knowledge coming into me from the machine.

and then it stops.

It is like waking with a light on the face, I gasp and leap in the seat and the blinkers pull my hair, I yell What did you do that for?

M’Clare is standing in front of me, he says Eighty-seven minutes is quite sufficient come out of that at once.

I try to stand and my knees won’t unhinge, to hear M’Clare you would think it was his legs I got cramp

in, I suppose I went to sleep in the middle of his remarks anyway I wake tomorrow in bed.

[Linebreak]

In the morning I tell it all to B because she is a friend of mine and it is instructive anyway.

B says Lizzie it must have been awful but it is rather wonderful too; I do not see it this way I say Well it is nice it is over.

Which it is not.

Four weeks took a long time from the front end but not when it is over and I have to take the exam.

I have made up my mind on one thing, if I do not pass I am not asking anyone to make allowances I am just straight off going home, I am too tired to think much about it but that is what I will do.

Exam, I look at all the busy interested faces and the stylers clicking along and at the end I am certain for sure I failed it by quite a way.

I do not join any post-morten groups I get to my room and lock the door and think for a bit.

I think That finishes it, no more strain and grind and Terrie voices and Please Tune In Daily For Routine Announcements and smells you get in some of this air, no more high-minded kids who don’t know dead sure from however, no more essays and No More M’Clare, I wish they would hurry up and get the marks over so I can get organized to count my blessings properly.

However sixty four-hour papers take time to read even with a Crammer and M’Clare dose them all himself, we shall get the marks day after tomorrow if then.

There is a buzz from the speaker in the study and B is not there, I have to go.

Of all people who should be too busy to call me just now it is Mr. M’Clare.

He says I have not notified him of my vacation plans yet.

I say Huh?

He says as my guardian he ought to know where I am to be found and he wants to be sure I have got return schedules fixed from wherever I am going to as to make certain I get back in time for next term.

I say Hell what makes you think I am coming back next term anyway.

He says Certainly I am coming back next term, if I am referring to the exam he has just had a look at my paper it is adequate though not outstanding no doubt I will do better with time. Will I let his secretary have details of my plans, and he turns it off on me.

I sit down on the floor, no chair to hand.

Well for one thing the bit about the vacations was not even meant to deceive, he did it just to let me know I was Through.

So I have not finished here after all.

The more I think about studying Cultural Engineering the more doubtful I get, it is pushing people around however you like to put it more fancy than that.

The more I think about Terries the more I wonder how they survived so long, some are all right such as B but evne she would not be so safe in most places I know.

The more I think—

Well who am I fooling after all?

The plain fact is I am not leaving Russett and all the rest of it and I am so pleased with this, just now I do not care if the whole College calls me Lysistrata.

The end of Unwillingly to School.

The Lost Kafoozalum,

Originally published in Analog Science Fact & Fiction, October 1960

I remember some bad times, most of them back home on Excenus 23; the worst was when Dad fell under the reaping machine but there was also the one when I got lost twenty miles from home with a dud radio, at the age of twelve; and the one when Uncle Charlie caught me practicing emergency turns in a helicar round the main weather-maker; and the one on Figuerra being chased by a cyber-crane; and the time when Dad decided to send me to Earth to do my Education.

This time is bad in a different way, with no sharp edges but a kind of a desolation.

Most people I know are feeling bad just now, because at Russett College we finished our Final Examination five days ago and Results are not due for a two weeks.

My friend B Laydon says this is yet another Test anyone still sane at the end being proved tough enough to break a molar on; she says also The worst part is in bed remembering all the things she could have written and did not; The second worst is also in

bed picturing how to explain to her parents when they get back to Earth that someone has to come bottom and in a group as brilliant as Russett College Cultural Engineering Class this is really no disgrace.

I am not worried that way so much, I cannot remember what I wrote anyway and I can think of one or two people I am pretty sure will come bottomer than me—or B either.

I would prefer to think it is just Finals cause me to feel miserable but it is not.

In Psychology they taught us The mind has the faculty of concealing any motive it is ashamed of, especially from itself; seems unfortunately mine does not have this gadget supplied.

I never wanted to come to Earth. I was sent to Russett against my will and counting the days till I could get back to Home, Father and Excensus 23, but the sad truth is that now the longed-for moment is nearly on top of me I do not want to go.

Dad's farm was a fine place to grow up, but now I had four years on Earth the thought of going back there makes me feel like a three-weeks' chicken got to get back in its shell.

B and I are on an island in the Pacific. Her parents are on Caratacus researching on local art forms, so she and I came here to be miserable in company and away from the rest.

It took me years on Earth to get used to all this water around, it seemed unnatural and dangerous to have it all lying loose that way, but now I shall miss even the Sea.

The reason we have this long suspense over Finals is that they will not use Reading Machines to mark the papers for fear of cutting down critical judgement; so each paper has to be read word by word by three Examiners and there are forty-three of us and we wrote six papers each.

What I think is I am sorry for the Examiners, but B says they were the ones who set the papers and it serves them perfectly right.

I express surprise because D. J. M'Clare our Professor is one of them, but B says He is one of the greatest men in the galaxy, of course, but she gave up thinking him perfect years ago.

One of the main attractions on this Island is swimming under water, especially by moonlight. Dad sent me a fish-boat as a birthday present two years back, but I never used it yet on account of my above-mentioned attitude to water. Now I got this feeling of Carpe Diem, make the most of Earth while I am on it because probably I shall not pass this way again.

The fourth day on the Island it is full moon at ten o'clock, so I pluck up courage to wriggle into the boat and go out under the Sea. B says Fish parading in and out of reefs just remind her of Cultural Engineering—crowd behavior—so she prefers to turn in early and find out what nightmares her subconscious will throw up this time.

The reefs by moonlight are everything they are supposed to be, why did I not do this often when I had the chance? I stay till my oxygen is nearly gone, then come out and sadly press the button that collapses the boat into a thirty-pound package of plastic hoops and oxygen cans. I sling it on my back and head for the chalet B and I hired among the coconut trees.

I am crossing an open space maybe fifty yards from it when a Thing drops on me out of the air.

I do not see the Thing because part of it covers my face, and the rest is grabbed round my arms and my waist and my hips and whatever, I cannot see and I cannot scream and I cannot find anything to kick. The Thing is strong and rubbery and many-armed and warmish, and less than a second after I first feel it I am being hauled up into the air.

I do not care for this at all.

I am at least fifty feet up before it occurs to me to bite the hand that gags me and then I discover it is plastic, not alive at all. Then I feel self and encumberance

scraping through some kind of aperture; there is a sharp click as of a door closing and the Thing goes limp all round me.

I spit out the bit I am biting and it drops away so that I can see.

Well!

I am in a kind of a cup-shaped space maybe ten feet across but not higher than I am; there is a trap door in the ceiling; the Thing is lying all around me in a mess of plastic arms, with an extensible stalk connecting it to the wall. I kick free and it turns over exposing the label FRAGILE CARGO right across the back.

The next thing I notice is two holdalls, B's and mine, clamped against the wall, and the next after that is the opening of a trap door in the ceiling and B's head silhouetted in it remarking Oh there you are Liz.

I confirm this statement and ask for explanations.

B says She doesn't understand all of it but it is all right.

It is not all right I reply, if she has joined some Society such as for the Realization of Fictitious Improbabilities that is her privilege but no reason to involve me.

B says Why do I not stop talking and come up and see for myself?

There is a slight hitch when I jam in the trap door, then B helps me get the boat off my back and I drop it on the Fragile Cargo and emerge into the cabin of a Hopper, drop-shaped, cargo-carrying; I have been in its hold till now.

There are one or two peculiar points about it, or maybe one or two hundred, such as the rate at which we are ascending which seems to be bringing us right into the Stratosphere; but the main thing I notice is the pilot. He has his back to us but is recognizably Ram Gopal who graduated in Cultural Engineering last year, Rumor says next to top of his class.

I ask him what kind of a melodramatic shenanigan is this?

B says We had to leave quietly in a hurry without attracting attention so she booked us out at the Hotel hours ago and she and Ram have been hanging around waiting for me ever since.

I point out that the scope-trace of an Unidentified Flying Object will occasion a lot more remark than a normal departure even at midnight.

At this Ram smiles in an inscrutable Oriental manner and B gets nearly as cross as I do, seems she has mentioned this point before.

We have not gone into it properly when the cabin suddenly shifts through a right angle. B and I go sliding down the vertical floor and end sitting on a window. There is a jolt and a shudder and Ram mutters things in Hindi and then suddenly Up is nowhere at all.

B and I scramble off the window and grab fixtures so as to stay put. The stars have gone and we can see nothing except the dim glow over the instruments; then suddenly lights go on outside.

We look out into the hold of a ship.

Our ten-foot teardrop is sitting next to another one, like two eggs in a rack. On the other side is a bulkhead; behind, the curve of the hull; and directly ahead an empty space, then another bulkhead and an open door, through which after a few seconds a head pokes cautiously.

The head is then followed by a body which kicks off against the wall and sails slowly towards us. Ram presses a stud and a door slides open in the hopper; but the new arrival stops himself with a hand on either side of the frame, his legs trailing any old how behind him. It is Peter Yeng Sen who graduated the year I did my Field Work.

He says, Gopal, dear fellow, there was no need for the knocking, we heard the bell all right.

Ram grumbles something about the guide beam being miss-set, and slides out of his chair. Peter announces that we have only just made it as the deadline is in seven minutes time; he waves B and me out of the hopper, through the door and into a corridor where a certain irregular vibration is coming from the walls.

Ram asks what is that tapping? And Peter sighs and says The present generation of students has no discipline at all.

At this B brakes with one hand against the wall and cocks her head to listen; next moment she laughs and starts banging with her fist on the wall.

Peter exclaims in Mandarin and tows her away by one wrist like a reluctant kite. The rapping starts again on the far side of the wall and I suddenly recognize a primitive signaling system called Regret or something, I guess because it was used by people in situations they did not like such as Sinking ships or solitary confinement; it is done by tapping water pipes and such.

Someone found it in a book and the more childish element in College learned it up for signaling during compulsory lectures. Interest waning abruptly when the lecturers started to learn it, too.

I never paid much attention not expecting to be in Solitary confinement much; this just shows you; next moment Ram opens a door and pushes me through it, the door clicks behind me and Solitary confinement is what I am in.

I remember this code is really called Remorse which is what I feel for not learning when I had the chance.

However I do not have long for it, a speaker in the wall requests everyone to lie down as acceleration is about to begin. I strap down on the couch which fills half the compartment, countdown begins and at zero the floor is suddenly down once more.

I wait till my stomach settles, then rise to explore.

I am in an oblong room about eight by twelve, it looks as though it had been hastily partitioned off from a

larger space. The walls are prefab plastic sheet, the rest is standard fittings slung in and bolted down with the fastenings showing.

How many of my classmates are on this ship? Remorse again as tapping starts on either side of me.

Discarding such Hypotheses as that Ram and Peter are going to hold us to ransom—which might work for me, since my Dad somehow got to be a millionaire, but not for B because her parents think money is vulgar—or that we are being carried off to found an ideal Colony somewhere—any first-year student can tell you why that won't work—only one idea seems plausible.

This is that Finals were not final and we are in for a Test of some sort.

After ten minutes I get some evidence; a Reading Machine is trundled in, the door immediately slamming shut so I do not see who trundles it.

I prowl round it looking for tricks but it seems standard; I take a seat in it, put on the headset and turn the switch.

Hypothesis confirmed, I suppose.

There is a reel in place and it contains background information on a problem in Cultural Engineering all set out the way we are taught to do it in Class. The Problem concerns developments on a planet got settled by two groups during the Exodus and been isolated ever since.

Well while a Reading Machine is running there is no time to think, it crams in data at full speed and evaluation has to wait. However my subconscious goes into action and when the reel stops it produces a Suspicion full grown.

The thing is too tidy.

When we were First Year we dreamed up situations like this and argued like mad over them, but they

were a lot too neat for real life and too dramatic as well.

However one thing M'Clare said to us, and every other lecturer too, just before the Finals, was Do not spend time trying to figure what the examiner was after but answer the question as set; I am more than halfway decided this is some mysterious Oriental idea of a joke but I get busy thinking in case it is not.

The Problem goes like this:

The planet is called Incognita in the reel and it is right on the edge of the known volume of space, it got settled by two groups somewhere between three and three and a half centuries ago. The rest of the human race never heard of it till maybe three years back.

(Well it happens that way, inhabited planets are still turning up eight or ten a century, on account of during the Exodus some folk were willing to travel a year or more so as to get away from the rest).

The ship that spotted the planet as inhabited did not land, but reported to Central Government, Earth, who shipped observers out to take a look.

(There was a rumor circulating at Russett that the Terry Government might employ some of us on that kind of job, but it never got official. I do not know whether to believe this bit or not.)

It is stated the observers landed secretly and mingled with the natives unobserved.

(This is not physically impossible but sounds too like a Field Trip to be true.)

The observers are not named but stated to be graduates of the Cultural Engineering Class.

They put in a few months' work and sent home unanimous Crash Priority reports the situation is bad, getting worse and the prognosis is War.

Brother.

I know people had wars, I know one reason we do not have them now is just that with so many planets and cheap transportation, pressure has other outlets; these people scrapped their ships for factories and never built more.

But.

There are only about ten million of them and surely to goodness a whole planet gives room enough to keep out of each other's hair?

Well this is not Reasoning but a Reaction, I go back to the data for another look.

The root trouble is stated to be that two groups landed on the planet without knowing the others were there, when they met thirty years later they got a disagreeable shock.

I cannot see there was any basic difference between them, they were very similar, especially in that neither lot wanted anything to do with people they had not picked themselves.

So they divided the planet along a Great Circle which left two of the main land-masses in one hemisphere and two in another.

They agree each to keep to its own section and leave the other alone.

Twenty years later, trading like mad; each has certain minerals the other lacks; each has certain agricultural products the other finds it difficult to grow.

You think this leads to Co-operation Friendship and ultimate Federation?

I will not go into the incidents that make each side feel it is being gypped, it is enough that from time to time each has a scarcity or hold-up on deliveries that upsets the other's economy; and they start experimenting to become self-sufficient: and the exporter's economy is upset in turn. And each thinks the other did it on purpose.

This sort of situation reacts internally leading to Politics.

There are troubles about a medium-sized island on the dividing line, and the profits from interhemispherical transport, and the laws of interhemispherical trade.

It takes maybe two hundred years, but finally each has expanded the Police into an army with a whole spectrum of weapons not to be used on any account except for Defense.

This situation lasts seventy years getting worse all the time, now Rumors have started on each side that the other is developing an Ultimate Weapon, and the political parties not in power are agitating to move first before the thing is complete.

The observers report War not maybe this year or the next but within ten, and if neither side was looking for an Ultimate Weapon to begin with they certainly are now.

Taking all this at face value there seems an obvious solution.

I am thinking this over in an academic sort of way when an itchy trickle of sweat starts down my vertebrae.

Who is going to apply this solution? Because if this is anything but another Test, or the output of a diseased sense of humor, I would be sorry for somebody.

I dial black coffee on the wall servitor and wish B were here so we could prove to each other the thing is just an exercise; I do not do so well at spotting proofs on my own.

Most of our class exercises have concerned something that happened, once.

After about ninety minutes the speaker requests me to write not more than one thousand words on any scheme to improve the situation and the equipment required for it.

I spent ten minutes verbalizing the basic idea and an hour or so on "equipment"; the longer I go on the more unlikely it all seems. In the end I have maybe

two hundred words which acting on instructions I post through a slit in the door.

Five minutes later I realize I have forgotten the Time Factor.

If the original ship took a year to reach Incognita, it will take at least four months now; therefore it is more than four months since that report was written and will be more than a year before anyone arrives and War may have started already.

I sit back and by transition of ideas start to wonder where this ship is heading? We are still at one gee and even on Mass-Time you cannot juggle apparent acceleration and spatial transition outside certain limits; we are not just orbiting but must be well outside the Solar System by now.

The speaker announces Everyone will now get some rest; I smell sleep-gas for one moment and have just time to lie down.

I guess I was tired, at that.

When I wake I feel more cheerful than I have for weeks; analysis indicates I am glad something is happening even if it is another Exam.

I dial breakfast but am too restless to eat; I wonder how long this goes on or whether I am supposed to show Initiative and break out; I am examining things with this in mind when the speaker comes to life again.

It says, "Ladies and gentlemen. You have not been told whether the problem that you studied yesterday concerned a real situation or an imaginary one. You have all outlined measures which you think would improve the situation described. Please consider, seriously, whether you would be prepared to take part yourself in the application of your plan."

Brother.

There is no way to tell whether those who say No will be counted cowardly or those who say Yes rash idiots or what, the owner of that voice has his inflections too

well trained to give anything away except intentionally.

D. J. M'Clare.

Not in person but a recording, anyway M'Clare is on Earth surrounded by exam papers.

I sit back and try to think, honestly, if that crack-brained notion I wrote out last night were going to be tried in dead earnest, would I take a hand in it?

The trouble is, hearing M'Clare's voice has convinced me it is a Test, I don't know whether it is testing my courage or my prudence in fact I might as well toss for it.

Heads I am crazy, Tails a defaulter; Tails is what it is.

I seize my styler and write the decision down.

There is the slit in the door.

I twiddle the note and think Well nobody asked for it yet.

Suppose it is real, after all?

I remember the itchy, sweaty feeling I got yesterday and try to picture really embarking on a thing like this, but I cannot work up any lather today.

I begin to picture M'Clare reading my decision not to back up my own idea.

I pick up the coin and juggle it around.

The speaker remarks When I am quite ready will I please make a note of my decision and post it through the door.

I go on flipping the coin up and presently it drops on the floor, it is Heads this time.

Tossing coins is a pretty feeble way to decide.

I drop the note on the floor and take another sheet and write "YES. Lysistrata Lee."

Using that name seems to make it more legal.

I slip the paper in the slit and poke till it falls through on the other side of the door.

I am suddenly immensely hungry and dial breakfast all over again.

Just as I finish M'Clare's voice starts once more.

"It's always the minor matters that cause the most difficulty. The timing of this announcement has cost me as much thought as any aspect of the arrangements. The trouble is that however honest you are—and your honesty has been tested repeatedly—and however strong your imagination—about half of your training has been devoted to developing it—you can't possibly be sure, answering a hypothetical question, that you are giving the answer you would choose if you knew it was asked in dead earnest.

"Those of you who answered the question in the negative are out of this. They have been told that it was a test, of an experimental nature, and have been asked to keep the whole thing a secret. They will be returning to Earth in a few hours' time. I ask the rest of you to think it over once again. Your decision is still private. Only the two people who gathered you together know which members of the class are in this ship. The list of possible helpers was compiled by a computer. I haven't seen it myself.

"You have a further half hour in which to make up your minds finally. Please remember that if you have any private reservations on the matter, or if you are secretly afraid, you may endanger us all. You all know enough psychology to realize this.

"If you still decide in favor of the project, write your name on a slip of paper and post it as before. If you are not absolutely certain about it, do nothing. Please think it over for half an hour."

Me, I had enough thinking. I write my name—just L. Lee—and post it straight away.

However I cannot stop thinking altogether. I guess I think very hard, in fact. My Subconscious insists afterwards that it did register the plop as something came through the slit, but my Conscious failed to notice it at all.

Hours later—my watch says twenty-five minutes but I guess the Mass-Time has affected it—anyway I had three times too much solitary confinement—when will they let me out of here?—there is a knock at the door and a second later it slides apart.

I am expecting Ram or Peter so it takes me an appreciable fraction of a moment to realize I am seeing D. J. M'Clare.

Then I remember he is back on Earth buried in Exam papers and conclude I am having a hallucination.

This figment of my imagination says politely, "Do you mind if I sit down?"

He collapses on the couch as though thoroughly glad of it.

It is a strange thing, every time I see M'Clare I am startled all over again at how good-looking he is; seems I forget it between times which is maybe why I never fell for him as most female students do.

However what strikes me this time is that he looks tired, three-days-sleepless tired with worries on top.

I guess he is real, at that.

He says, "Don't look so accusing, Lizzie, I only just got on this ship myself."

This does not make sense; you cannot just arrive on a ship twenty-four hours after it goes on Mass-Time; or can you?

M'Clare leans back and closes his eyes and inquires whether I am one of the Morse enthusiasts?

So that is the name; I say when we get back I will learn it first thing.

"Well," says he, "I did my best to arrange privacy for all of you; with so many ingenious idiots on board I'm not really surprised that they managed to circumvent me. I had to cheat and check that you really were on the list; and I knew that whoever backed out you'd still be on board."

So I should hope he might: Horrors there is my first answer screwed up on the floor and Writing side top-most.

However he has not noticed it, he goes on "Anyway you of all people won't be thought to have dropped out because you were afraid."

I have just managed to hook my heel over the note and get it out of sight, M'Clare has paused for an answer and I have to dredge my Sub-threshold memories for—

WHAT?

M'Clare opens his eyes and says like I am enacting Last Straw, "Have some sense, Lizzie." Then in a

different tone, "Ram says he gave you the letter half an hour ago."

What letter?

My brain suddenly registers a small pale patch been occupying a corner of my retina for the last half hour; it turns out to be a letter postmarked Excenus 23.

I disembowel it with one jerk. It is from my Dad and runs like this:

My dear Liz,

Thank you for your last letter, glad you are keeping fit and so am I.

I just got a letter from your College saying you will get a degree conferred on you on September 12th and parents if on Earth will be welcome.

Well Liz this I got to see and Charlie says the same, but the letter says too Terran Authority will not give a permit to visit Earth just for this, so I wangled on to a

Delegation which is coming to discuss trade with the Department of Commerce. Charlie and I will be arriving on Earth on August 24th.

Liz it is good to think I shall be seeing you again after four years. There are some things about your future I meant to write to Professor M'Clare about, but now I shall be able to talk it over direct. Please give him my regards.

Be seeing you Lizzie girl, your affectionate Dad

J. X. Lee.

Dear old Dad, after all these years farming with a weather-maker on a drydust planet I want to see his face the first time he sees real rain.

Hell's fires and shades of darkness, I shan't be there!

M'Clare says, "Your father wrote to me saying that he will be arriving on Earth on 24th August. I take it your letter says the same. I came on a dispatch boat; you can go back on it."

Now what is he talking about? Then I get the drift.

I say, "Look. So Dad will be on Earth before we get back. What difference does that make?"

"You can't let him arrive and find you missing."

Well I admit to a qualm at the thought of Dad let loose on Earth without me, but after all Uncle Charlie is a born Terrie and can keep him in line; Hell he is old enough to look after himself anyway.

"You met my Dad," I point out. "You think J. X. Lee would want any daughter of his backing out on a job so as to hold his hand? I can send him a letter saying I am off on a job or a Test or whatever I please and hold everything till I get back; what are you doing about people's families on Earth already?"

M'Clare says we were all selected as having families not on Earth at present, and I must go back.

I say like Hell I will.

He says he is my official guardian and responsible for me.

I say he is just as responsible for everyone else on this ship.

I spent years and years trying to think up a remark would really get home to M'Clare; well I have done it now.

I say, "Look. You are tired and worried and maybe not thinking so well just now.

"I know this is a very risky job, don't think I missed that at all. I tried hard to imagine it like you said over the speaker. I cannot quite imagine dying but I know how Dad will feel if I do.

"I did my level best to scare myself sick, then I decided it is just plain worth the risk anyway.

"To work out a thing like this you have to have a kind of arithmetic, you add in everybody's feelings with the

other factors, then if you get a plus answer you forget everything else and go right ahead.

"I am not going to think about it any more, because I added up the sum and got the answer and upsetting my nerves won't help. I guess you worked out the sum, too. You decided four million people were worth risking twenty, even if they do have parents. Even if they are your students. So they are, too, and you gave us all a chance to say No.

"Well nothing has altered that, only now the values look different to you because you are tired and worried and probably missed breakfast, too."

Brother some speech, I wonder what got into me? M'Clare is wondering, too, or maybe gone to sleep sitting, it is some time before he answers me.

"Miss Lee, you are deplorably right on one thing at least. I don't know whether I was fit to make such a decision when I made it, but I'm not fit now. As far as you personally are concerned…." He trails off looking tireder than ever, then picks up again suddenly. "You

are again quite right, I am every bit as responsible for the other people on board as I am for you."

He climbs slowly to his feet and walks out without another word.

The door is left open and I take this as an invitation to freedom and shoot through in case it was a mistake.

No because Ram is opening doors all along the corridor and ten of Russett's brightest come pouring out like mercury finding its own level and coalesce in the middle of the floor.

The effect of release is such that after four minutes Peter Yeng Sen's head appears at the top of a stairway and he says the crew is lifting the deck plates, will we for Time's sake go along to the Conference Room which is soundproof.

The Conference Room is on the next deck and like our cabins shows signs of hasty construction; the soundproofing is there but the acoustics are kind of muffled and the generator is not boxed in but has

cables trailing all over, and the fastenings have a strong but temporary look.

Otherwise there is a big table and a lot of chairs and a small projection box in front of each with a note-taker beside.

It is maybe this very functional setup or maybe the dead flatness of our voices in the damped room, but we do not have so much to talk about any more. We automatically take places at the table, all at one end, leaving seven vacant chairs near the door.

Looking round, I wonder what principle we were selected on.

Of my special friends Eru Te Whangoa and Kirsty Lammergaw are present but Lily Chen and Likofo Komom'baratse and Jean LeBrun are not; we have Cray Patterson who is one of my special enemies but not Blazer Weigh or the Astral Cad; the rest are P. Zapotec, Nick Howard, Aro Mestah, Dillie Dixie, Pavel Christianovitch, Lennie DiMaggio and Shootright Crow.

Eru is at the end of the table, opposite the door, and maybe feels this position puts it up to him to start the discussion; he opens by remarking "So nobody took the opportunity to withdraw."

Cray Patterson lifts his eyebrows ceilingwards and drawls out that the decision was supposed to be a private one.

B says "Maybe but it did not work out that way, everyone who learned Morse knows who was on the ship, anyway they are all still here so what does it matter? And M'Clare would not have picked people who were going to funk it, after all."

My chair gets a kick on the ankle which I suppose was meant for B; Eru is six foot five but even his legs do not quite reach; he is the only one of us facing the door.

M'Clare has somehow shed his weariness; he looks stern but fresh as a daisy. There are four with him; Ram and Peter looking serious, one stranger in Evercleans looking determined to enjoy the party and

another in uniform looking as though nothing would make him.

M'Clare introduces the strangers as Colonel Delano-Smith and Mr. Yardo. They all sit down at the other end of the table; then he frowns at us and begins like this:

"Miss Laydon is mistaken. You were not selected on any such grounds as she suggests. I may say that I was astonished at the readiness with which you all engaged yourselves to take part in such a desperate gamble; and, seeing that for the last four years I have been trying to persuade you that it is worth while, before making a decision of any importance, to spend a certain amount of thought on it, I was discouraged as well."

Oh.

"The criterion upon which you were selected was a very simple one. As I told you, you were picked not by me but by a computer; the one in the College Office which registers such information as your home

addresses and present whereabouts. You are simply that section of the class which could be picked up without attracting attention, because you all happened to be on holiday by yourselves or with other members of the class; and because your nearest relatives are not on Earth at present."

Oh, well.

All of us can see M'Clare is doing a job of deflation on us for reasons of his own, but it works for all that.

He now seems to feel the job is complete and relaxes a bit.

"I was interested to see that you all, without exception, hit on variations of the same idea. It is of course the obvious way to deal with the problem." He smiles at us suddenly and I get mad at myself because I know he is following the rules for introducing a desired state of mind, but I am responding as meant. "I'll read you the most succinct expression of it; you may be able to guess the author."

Business with bits of paper.

"Here it is. I quote: 'Drag in some outsider looks like he is going for both sides; they will gang up on him.'"

Yells of laughter and shouts of "Lizzie Lee!" even the two strangers produce sympathetic grins; I do not find it so funny as all that myself.

"Ideas as to the form the 'outsider' should take were more varied. This is a matter I propose to leave you to work out together, with the assistance of Colonel Delano-Smith and Mr. Yardo. Te Whangoa, you take the chair."

Exit M'Clare.

This leaves the two halves of the table eying one another. Ram and Peter have been through this kind of session in their time; now they are leaning back preparing to watch us work. It is plain we are supposed to impress the abilities of Russett near-graduates on the two strangers, and for some moments we are all occupied taking them in. Colonel

Delano-Smith is a small, neat guy with a face that has all the muscular machinery for producing an expression; he just doesn't care to use it. Mr. Yardo is taller than any of us except Eru and flesh is spread very thin on his bones, including his face which splits now and then in a grin like an affable skeleton. Where the colonel fits is guessable enough, Mr. Yardo is presumably Expert at something but no data on what.

Eru rests his hands on the table and says we had better start; will somebody kindly outline an idea for making the Incognitans "gang up"? The simpler the better and it does not matter whether it is workable or not; pulling it to pieces will give us a start.

We all wait to see who will rush in; then I catch Eru's eye and see I am elected Clown again. I say "Send them a letter postmarked Outer Space signed BEM saying we lost our own planet in a nova and will take over theirs two weeks from Tuesday."

Mr. Yardo utters a sharp "Ha! Ha!" but it is not seconded; the colonel having been expressionless all along becomes more so; Eru says, "Thank you, Lizzie."

He looks across at Cray who is opposite me; Cray says there are many points on which he might comment; to take only one, two weeks from Tuesday leaves little time for 'ganging up', and what happens when the BEMs fail to come?

We are suddenly back in the atmosphere of a seminar; Eru's glance moves to P. Zapotec sitting next to Cray, and he says, "These BEMs who lost their home planet in a nova, how many ships have they? Without a base they cannot be very dangerous unless their fleet is very large."

It goes round the table.

Pavel: "How would BEMs learn to write?"

Nick: "How are they supposed to know that Incognita is inhabited? How do they address the letter?"

The Crow: "Huh. Why write letters? Invaders just invade."

Kirsty: "We don't want to inflame these people against alien races. We might find one some day. It seems to me this idea might have all sorts of undesirable by-products. Suppose each side regards it as a ruse on the part of the other. We might touch off a war instead of preventing it. Suppose they turn over to preparations for repelling the invaders, to an extent that cripples their economy? Suppose a panic starts?"

Dilly: "Say, Mr. Chairman, is there any of this idea left at all? How about an interim summary?"

Eru coughs to get a moment for thought, then says:

"In brief, the problem is to provide a menace against which the two groups will be forced to unite. It must have certain characteristics.

"It must be sufficiently far off in time for the threat to last several years, long enough to force them into a real combination.

"It must obviously be a plausible danger and they must get to know of it in a plausible manner. Invasion from outside is the only threat so far suggested.

"It must be a limited threat. That is, it must appear to come from one well-defined group. The rest of the Universe should appear benevolent or neutral."

He just stops, rather as though there is something else to come; while the rest of us are waiting B sticks her oar in to the following effect.

"Yes, but look, suppose this goes wrong; it's all very well to make plans but suppose we get some of Kirsty's side-effects just the same, well what I mean is suppose it makes the mess worse instead of better we want some way we can sort of switch it off again.

"Look this is just an illustration, but suppose the Menace was pirates, if it went wrong we could have an Earth ship make official contact and they could just happen to say By the way have you seen anything of some pirates, Earth fleet wiped them up in this sector about six months ago.

"That would mean the whole crew conniving, so it won't do, but you see what I mean."

There is a bit of silence, then Aro says, "I think we should start fresh. We have had criticisms of Lizzie's suggestion, which was not perhaps wholly serious, and as Dilly says there is little of it left, except the idea of a threat of invasion. The idea of an alien intelligent race has objections and would be very difficult to fake. The invaders must be men from another planet. Another unknown one. But how do the people of Incognita come to know that they exist?"

More silence, then I hear my own voice speaking although it was my intention to keep quiet for once: it sounds kind of creaky and it says: "A ship. A crashed ship from Outside."

Whereupon another voice says, "Really! Am I expected to swallow this?"

We had just about forgotten the colonel, not to mention Mr. Yardo who contributes another "Ha! Ha!" so this reminder comes as a slight shock, nor do we

see what he is talking about but this he proceeds to explain.

"I don't know why M'Clare thought it necessary to stage this discussion. I am already acquainted with his plan and have had orders to co-operate. I have expressed my opinion on using undergraduates in a job like this and have been overruled. If he, or you, imagine that priming you to bring out his ideas like this is going to reconcile me to the whole business you are mistaken. He might have chosen a more suitable mouthpiece than that child with the curly hair—"

Here everybody wishes to reply at once; the resulting jam produces a moment of silence and I get in first.

"As for curly hair I am rising twenty-four and I was only saying what we all thought, if we have the same ideas as M'Clare that is because he taught us for four years. How else would you set about it anyway?"

My fellow students pick up their stylers and tap solemnly three times on the table; this is the Russett

equivalent of "Hear! Hear!" and the colonel is surprised.

Eru says coldly, "This discussion has not been rehearsed. As Lizzie ... as Miss Lee says, we have been working and thinking together for four years and have been taught by the same people."

"Very well," says Delano-Smith testily. "Tell me this, please: Do you regard this idea as practicable?"

Cray tilts his chair back and remarks to the ceiling, "This is rather a farce. I suppose we had to go through our paces for the colonel's benefit—and Mr. Yardo's of course—but can't we be briefed properly now?"

"What do you mean by that?" snaps the colonel.

"It's been obvious right along," says Cray, balancing his styler on one forefinger, "so obvious none of us has bothered to mention it, that accepting the normal limitations of Mass-Time, the idea of interfering in Incognita was doomed before it began. No

conventional ship would have much hope of arriving before war broke out; and if it did arrive it couldn't do anything effective. Therefore I assume that this is not a conventional ship. I might accept that the Government has sent us out in a futile attempt to do the impossible, but I wouldn't believe that of M'Clare."

Cray is the only Terry I know acts like an Outsider's idea of one; many find this difficult to take and the colonel is plainly one of them. Eru intervenes quickly.

"I imagine we all realized that. Anyway this ship is obviously not a conventional model. If you accept the usual Mass-Time relationship between the rate of transition and the fifth power of the apparent acceleration, we must have reached about four times the maximum already."

"Ram!" says B suddenly, "What did you do to stop the Hotel scope registering the little ship you picked up me and Lizzie in?"

Everybody cuts in with something they have noticed about the capabilities of this ship or the hoppers, and Lenny starts hammering on the table and chanting! "Brief! Brief! Brief!" and others are just starting to join in when Eru bangs on the table and glares us all down.

Having got silence, he says very quietly, "Colonel Delano-Smith, I doubt whether this discussion can usefully proceed without a good deal more information; will you take over?"

The colonel looks round at all the eager earnest interested maps hastily put on for his benefit and decides to take the plunge.

"Very well. I suppose it is ... very well. The decision to use students from Russett was made at a very high level, and I suppose—" Instead of saying "Very well" again he shrugs his shoulders and gets down to it.

"The report from the planet we decided to call 'Incognita' was received thirty-one days ago. The Department of Spatial Affairs has certain resources

which are not generally known. This ship is one of them. She works on a modified version of Mass-Time which enables her to use about a thousand channels instead of the normal limit of two hundred; for good and sufficient reasons this has not been generally released."

Pause while we are silently dared to doubt the Virtue and sufficiency of these reasons which personally I do not.

"To travel to Incognita direct would take about fifteen days by the shortest route. We shall take eighteen days as we shall have to make a detour."

But presumably we shall take only fifteen days back. Hurrah we can spend a week round the planet and still be back in time for Commemoration. We shall skip maybe a million awkward questions and I shall not disappoint Dad.

It is plain the colonel is not filled with joy; far from it, he did not enjoy revealing a Departmental secret however obvious, but he likes the next item even less.

"We shall detour to an uninhabited system twelve days' transit time from here and make contact with another ship, the Gilgamesh."

At which Lennie DiMaggio who has been silent till now brings his fist down on the table and exclaims, "You can't!"

Lennie is much upset for some reason; Delano-Smith gives him a peculiar look and says what does he know about it? and Lennie starts to stutter.

Cray remarks that Lennie's childhood hobby appears to have been spaceships and he suffers from arrested development.

B says it is well known Lennie is mad about the Space Force and why not? It seems to have uses Go on and tell us Lennie.

Lennie says "G-Gilgamesh was lost three hundred years ago!"

"The flaw in that statement," says Cray after a pause, "is that this may be another ship of the same name."

"No," says the colonel. "Explorer Class cruiser. They went out of service two hundred eighty years back."

The Space Force, I remember, does not re-use names of lost ships: some says Very Proper Feeling some say Superstitious Rot.

B says, "When was she found again?"

Lennie says it was j-just thirty-seven revolutions of his native planet which means f-f-fifty-three Terrestrial years ago, she was found by an Interplanetary scout called Crusoe.

Judging by the colonel's expression this data is Classified; he does not know that Lennie's family come from one of the oldest settled planets and are space-goers to a man, woman, and juvenile; they pick up ship gossip the way others hear about the relations of people next door.

Lennie goes on to say that the Explorer Class were the first official exploration ships sent out from Earth when the Terries decided to find out what happened to the colonies formed during the Exodus. Gilgamesh was the first to re-make contact with Garuda, Legba, Lister, Cor-bis and Antelope; she vanished on her third voyage.

"Where was she found?" asks Eru.

"Near the p-p-pole of an uninhabited planet—maybe I shouldn't say where because that may be secret, but the rest's History if you know where to look."

Maybe the colonel approves this discretion; anyway his face thaws very slightly unless I am Imagining it.

"Gilgamesh crashed," he says. "Near as we can make out from the log, she visited Seleucis system. That's a swarmer sun. Fifty-seven planets, three settled; and any number of fragments. The navigator calculated that after a few more revolutions one of the fragments was going to crash on an inhabited planet. Might have

done a lot of damage. They decided to tow it out of the way.

"Grappling-beams hadn't been invented. They thought they could use Mass-Time on it a kind of reverse thrust—throw it off course.

"Mass-Time wasn't so well understood then. Bit off more than they could chew. Set up a topological relation that drained all the free energy out of the system. Drive, heating system—everything.

"She had emergency circuits. When the engines came on again they took over—landed the ship, more or less, on the nearest planet. Too late, of course. Heating system never came on—there was a safety switch that had to be thrown by hand. She was embedded in ice when she was found. Hull breached at one point—no other serious damage."

"And the ... the crew?"

Dillie ought to know better than that.

"Lost with all hands," says the colonel.

"How about weapons?"

We are all startled. Cray is looking whitish like the rest of us but maintains his normal manner, i.e. offensive affection while pointing out that Gilgamesh can hardly be taken for a Menace unless she has some means of aggression about her.

Lennie says The Explorer Class were all armed—

Fine, says Cray, presumably the weapons will be thoroughly obsolete and recognizable only to a Historian—

Lennie says the construction of no weapon developed by the Space Department has ever been released; making it plain that anyone but a Nitwit knows that already.

Eru and Kirsty have been busy for some time writing notes to each other and she now gives a small sharp

cough and having collected our attention utters the following Address.

"There is a point we seem to have missed. If I may recapitulate, the idea is to take this ship Gilgamesh to Incognita and make it appear as though she had crashed there while attempting to land. I understand that the ship has been buried in the polar cap; though she must have been melted out if the people on Crusoe examined the engines. Of course the cold—All the same there may have been ... well ... changes. Or when ... when we thaw the ship out again—"

I find I am swallowing good and hard, and several of the others look sick, especially Lennie. Lennie has his eyes fixed on the colonel; it is not prescience, but a slight sideways movement of the colonel's eye causes him to blurt out, "What is he doing here?"

Meaning Mr. Yardo who seems to have been asleep for some time, with his eyes open and grinning like the spikes on a dog collar. The colonel gives him another sideways look and says, "Mr. Yardo is an

expert on the rehabilitation of space-packed materials."

This is stuff transported in un-powered hulls towed by grappling-beams; the hulls are open to space hence no need for refrigeration, and the contents are transferred to specially equipped orbital stations before being taken down to the planet. But—

Mr. Yardo comes to life at the sound of his name and his grin widens alarmingly.

"Especially meat," he says.

It is maybe two hours afterwards, Eru having adjourned the meeting abruptly so that we can ... er ... take in the implications of the new data. Lennie has gone off somewhere by himself; Kirsty has gone after him with a view to Mothering him; Eru, I suspect, is looking for Kirsty; Pavel and Aro and Dillie and the Crow are in a cabin arguing in whispers; Nick and P. Zapotec are exploring one of the Hoppers, cargo-carrying, drop-shaped, and I only hope they don't hop through the hull in it.

B and I having done a tour of the ship and ascertained all this have withdrawn to the Conference Room because we are tired of our cabins and this seems to be the only other place to sit.

B breaks a long silence with the remark that However often you see it M'Clare's technique is something to watch, like choosing my statement to open with, it broke the ice beautifully.

I say, "Shall I tell you something?"

B says Yes if it's interesting.

"My statement," I inform her, "ran something like this: The best hope of inducing a suspension of the aggressive attitude of both parties, long enough to offer hope of ultimate reconciliation, lies in the intrusion of a new factor in the shape of an outside force seen to be impartially hostile to both."

B says: "Gosh. Come to think of it Liz you have not written like that in years, you have gone all pompous

like everyone else; well that makes it even more clever of M'Clare."

Enter Cray Patterson and drapes himself sideways on a chair, announcing that his own thoughts begin to weary him.

I say this does not surprise me, at all.

"Lizzie my love," says he, "you are twice blessed being not only witty yourself but a cause of wit in others; was that bit of Primitive Lee with which M'Clare regaled us really not from the hand of the mistress, or was it a mere pastiche?"

I say Whoever wrote that it was not me anyway.

"It seemed to me pale and luke-warm compared with the real thing," says Cray languidly, "which brings me to a point that, to quote dear Kirsty, seems to have been missed."

I say, "Yep. Like what language it was that these people wrote their log in that we can be certain the Incognitans won't know."

"More than that," says B, "we didn't decide who they are or where they were coming from or how they came to crash or anything."

"Come to think of it, though," I point out, "the language and a good many other things must have been decided already because of getting the right hypnotapes and translators on board."

B suddenly lights up.

"Yes, but look, I bet that's what we're here for, I mean that's why they picked us instead of Space Department people—the ship's got to have a past history, it has to come from a planet somewhere only no one must ever find out where it's supposed to be. Someone will have to fake a log, only I don't see how __"

"The first reel with data showing the planet of origin got damaged during the crash," says Cray impatiently.

"Yes, of course—but we have to find a reason why they were in that part of Space and it has to be a nice one, I mean so that the Incognitans when they finally read the log won't hate them any more—"

"Maybe they were bravely defending their own planet by hunting down an interplanetary raider," I suggest.

Cray says it will take only the briefest contact with other planets to convince the Incognitans that interplanetary raiders can't and don't exist, modern planetary alarm and defense systems put them out of the question.

"That's all he knows," says B, "some interplanetary pirates raided Lizzie's father's farm once. Didn't they, Liz?"

"Yes in a manner of speaking, but they were bums who pinched a spaceship from a planet not many parsecs away, a sparsely inhabited mining world like

my own which had no real call for an alarm system, so that hardly alters the argument."

"Well," says B, "the alarm system on Incognita can't be so hot or the observation ships could not have got in, or out, for that matter, unless of course they have some other gadget we don't know about."

"On the other hand," she considers, "to mention Interplanetary raiders raises the idea of Menace in an Unfriendly Universe again, and this is what we want to cancel out.

"These people," she says at last with a visionary look in her eye, "come from a planet which went isolationist and abandoned space travel; now they have built up their civilization to a point where they can build ships of their own again, and the ones on Gilgamesh have cut loose from the ideas of their ancestors that led to their going so far afield—"

"How far afield?" says Cray.

"No one will ever know," I point out to him. "Don't interrupt."

"Anyway," says B, "they set out to rejoin the rest of the Human Race just like the people on Gilgamesh really did, in fact, a lot of this is the truth only kind of backwards—they were looking for the Cradle of the Race, that's what. Then there was some sort of disaster that threw them off course to land on an uninhabited section of a planet that couldn't understand their signals. And when Incognita finally does take to space flight again I bet the first thing the people do is to try and follow back to where Gilgamesh came from and make contact with them. It'll become a legend on Incognita—the Lost People ... the Lost ... Lost—"

"The Lost Kafoozalum," says Cray. "In other words we switch these people off a war only to send them on a wild goose chase."

At which a strange voice chimes in, "No, no, no, son, you've got it all wrong."

Mr. Yardo is with us like a well-meaning skeleton.

During the next twenty-five minutes we learn a lot about Mr. Yardo including material for a good guess at how he came to be picked for this expedition; doubtless there are many experts on Reversal Of Vacuum-Induced Changes in Organic Tissues but maybe only one of them a Romantic at heart.

Mr. Yardo thinks chasing the Wild Goose will do the Incognitans all the good in the galaxy, it will take their minds off controversies over interhemispherical trade and put them on to the quest of the Unobtainable; they will get to know something of the Universe outside their own little speck. Mr. Yardo has seen a good deal of the Universe in the course of advising on how to recondition space-packed meat and he found it an Uplifting Experience.

We gather he finds this desperate bit of damfoolery we are on now pretty Uplifting altogether.

Cray keeps surprisingly quiet but it is as well that the rest of the party start to trickle in about twenty

minutes later the first arrivals remarking Oh that's where you've got to!

Presently we are all congregated at one end of the table as before, except that Mr. Yardo is now sitting between B and me; when M'Clare and the colonel come in he firmly stays where he is evidently considering himself One of Us now.

"The proposition," says M'Clare, "is that we intend to take Gilgamesh to Incognita and land her there in such a way as to suggest that she crashed. In the absence of evidence to the contrary the Incognitans are bound to assume that that was her intended destination, and the presence of weapons, even disarmed, will suggest that her mission was aggressive. Firstly, can anyone suggest a better course of action? or does anyone object to this one?"

We all look at Lennie who sticks his hands in his pockets and mutters "No."

Kirsty gives her little cough and says there is a point which has not been mentioned.

If a heavily-armed ship crashes on Incognita, will not the government of the hemisphere in which it crashes be presented with new ideas for offensive weapons? And won't this make it more likely that they will start aggression? And won't the fear of this make the other hemisphere even more likely to try and get in first before the new weapons are complete?

Hell, I ought to have thought of that.

From the glance of unwilling respect which the colonel bestows on M'Clare it is plain these points have been dealt with.

"The weapons on Gilgamesh were disarmed when she was rediscovered," he says. "Essential sections were removed. The Incognitans won't be able to reconstruct how they worked."

Another fact for which we shall have to provide an explanation. Well how about this: The early explorers sent out by these people—the people in Gilgamesh ... oh, use Cray's word and call them Lost Kafoozalum anyway their ships were armed, but they never found

any enemies and the Idealists of B's story refused even to carry arms any more.

(Which is just about what happened when the Terries set out to rediscover the colonies, after all.)

So the Lost Kafoozalum could not get rid of their weapons completely because it would have meant rebuilding the ship; so they just partially dismantled them.

Mr. Yardo suddenly chips in, "About that other point, girlie, surely there must be some neutral ground left on a half-occupied planet like that?" He beams round, pleased at being able to contribute.

B says, "The thing is," and stops

We wait.

We have about given up hope when she resumes, "The thing is, it will have to be neutral ground of course, only that might easily become a thingummy ... I mean a, a casus belli in itself. So the other thing is it ought

to be a place which is very hard to get at, so difficult that neither side can really get to it first, they'll have to reach an agreement and co-operate."

"Yeah," says Dillie "that sounds fine, but what sort of place is that?"

I am sorting out in my head the relative merits of mountains, deserts, gorges, et cetera, when I an seized with inspiration at the same time as half the group; we say the same thing in different words and for a time there is Babel, then the idea emerges:

"Drop her into the sea!"

The colonel nods resignedly.

"Yes," he says, "that's what we're going to do."

He presses a button and our projection-screens light up, first with a map of one pole of Incognita, expanding in scale till finally we are looking down on one little bit of coast on one of the polar islands. A glacier descends on to it from mountains inland and

there is a bay between cliffs. Then we get a stereo scene of approximately the least hospitable of scenery I ever did see—except maybe when Parvati Lal Dutt's brother made me climb up what he swore was the smallest peak in the Himalayas.

It is a small bay backed by tumbled cliffs. A shelving beach can be deduced from contour and occasional boulders big enough to stick through the snow that smothers it all. A sort of mess of rocks and mud at the back may be glacial moraine. Over the sea the ice is split in all directions by jagged rifts and channels; the whole thing is a bit like Antarctica but nothing is high enough or white enough to uplift the spirit, it looks not only chilly but kind of mean.

"This place," says the colonel, "is the only one, about which we have any topographical information, that seems to meet the requirements. Got to know about it through an elementary planetography. One of the observers had the sense to see we might need something of the sort. This place"—the stereo jigs as he taps his projector—"seems it's the center of a rising movement in the crust ... that's not to the point.

Neither side has bothered to claim the land at the poles...."

I see their point if it's all like this—

"... And a ship trying to land on those cliffs might very well pitch over into the sea. That is, if she were trying to land on emergency rockets."

Rockets—that brings home the ancientness of this ship Gilgamesh—but after all the ships that settled Incognita probably carried emergency rockets, too.

This settled, the meeting turns into a briefing session and merges imperceptibly with the beginning of the job.

The job of course is Faking the background of the crash; working out the past history and present aims of the Lost Kafoozalum. We have to invent a planet and what's more difficult convey all the essential information about it by the sort of sideways hints you gather among peoples' personal possessions; diaries, letters et cetera; and what is even more difficult we

have to leave out anything that could lead to definite identification of our unknown world with any known one.

We never gave that world a name; it might be dangerous. Who speaks of their world by name, except to strangers? They call it "home"—or "Earth," as often as not.

Some things have been decided for us. Language, for instance—one of two thousand or so Earth tongues that went out of use late enough to be plausible as the main language of a colonized planet. The settlers on Incognita were not of the sort to take along dictionaries of the lesser-known tongues, so the computers at Russett had a fairly wide choice.

We had to take a hypnocourse in that language. Ditto the script, one of several forgotten phonetic shorthands. (Designed to enable the tongues of Aliens to be written down; but the Aliens have never been met. It is plausible enough that some colony might have kept the script alive; after all Thasia uses something of the sort to this day.)

The final result of our work looks pretty small. Twenty-three "Personal Background Sets"—a few letters, a diary in some, an assortment of artifacts. Whoever stocked this ship we are on supplied wood, of the half-dozen kinds that have been taken wherever men have gone; stocks of a few plastics—known at the time of the Exodus, or easily developed from those known, and not associated with any particular planet. Also books on Design, a Form-writer for translating drawings into materials, and so on. Someone put in a lot of work before this voyage began.

Most of the time it is like being back on Russet doing a group Project. What we are working on has no more and no less reality than that. Our work is all read into a computer and checked against everybody else's. At first we keep clashing. Gradually a consistent picture builds up and gets translated finally into the Personal Background Kits. The Lost Kafoozalum start to exist like people in a History book.

Fifteen days hard work and we have just about finished; then we reach—call it Planet Gilgamesh.

I wake in my bunk to hear that there will be brief cessation of weight; strap down, please.

We are coming off Mass-Time to go on planetary drive.

Colonel Delano-Smith is in charge of operations on the planet, with Ram and Peter to assist. None of the rest of us see the melting out of fifty years' accumulation of ice, the pumping away of the water, the fitting and testing of the holds for the grappling-beams. We stay inside the ship, on five-eighths gee which we do not have time to get used to, and try to work, and discard the results before the computer can do so. There is hardly any work left to do, anyway.

It takes nearly twelve hours to get the ship free, and caulked, and ready to lift. (Her hull has to be patched because of Mr. Yardo's operations which make use of several sorts of vapors). Then there is a queer blind period with Up now one way, now another, and sudden jerks and tugs that upset everything not in gimbals or tied down; interspersed with periods when weightlessness supervenes with no warning at all.

After an hour or two of this it would be hard to say whether Mental or physical discomfort is more acute; B consulted, however, says my autonomic system must be quite something, after five minutes her thoughts were with her viscera entirely.

Then, suddenly, we are back on Mass-Time again.

Two days to go.

At first being on Mass-Time makes everything seem normal again. By sleep time there is a strain, and next day it is everywhere. I know as well as any that on Mass-Time the greater the mass the faster the shift; all the same I cannot help feeling we are being slowed, dragged back by the dead ship coupled to our live one.

When you stand by the hull Gilgamesh is only ten feet away.

I should have kept something to work on like B and Kirsty who have not done their Letters for Home in Case of Accidents; mine is signed and sealed long

ago. I am making a good start on a Neurosis when Delano-Smith announces a Meeting for one hour ahead.

Hurrah! now there is a time-mark fixed I think of all sorts of things I should have done before; for instance taking a look at the controls of the Hoppers.

I have been in one of them half an hour and figured out most of the dials—Up down and sideways are controlled much as in a helicar, but here a big viewscreen has been hooked in to the autopilot—when across the hold I see the air lock start to move.

Gilgamesh is on the other side.

It takes forever to open. When at last it swings wide on the dark tunnel what comes through is a storage rack, empty, floating on antigrav.

What follows is a figure in a spacesuit; modern type, but the windows of the hopper are semipolarized and I cannot make out the face inside the bubble top.

He slings the rack upon the bulkhead, takes off the helmet and hangs that up, too. Then he just stands. I am beginning to muster enough sense to wonder why when he comes slowly across the hold.

Reaching the doorway he says: "Oh it's you, Lizzie. You'll have to help me out of this. I'm stuck."

M'Clare.

The outside of the suit is still freezing cold; maybe this is what has jammed the fastening. After a few minutes tugging it suddenly gives away. M'Clare climbs out of the suit, leaving it standing, and says, "Help me count these, will you?"

These are a series of transparent containers from a pouch slung at one side of the suit. I recognize them as the envelopes in which we put what are referred to as Personal Background Sets.

I say, "There ought to be twenty-three."

"No," says M'Clare dreamily, "twenty-two, we're saving one of them."

"What on earth is the use of an extra set of faked documents and oddments—"

He seems to wake up suddenly and says: "What are you doing here, Lizzie?"

I explain and he wanders over to the hopper and starts to explain the controls.

There is something odd about all this. M'Clare is obviously dead tired, but kind of relaxed; seeing that the hour of Danger is only thirty-six hours off I don't understand it. Probably several of his students are going to have to risk their lives—

I am on the point of seeing something important when the speaker announces in the colonel's voice that Professor M'Clare and Miss Lee will report to the Conference Room at once please.

M'Clare looks at me and grins. "Come along, Lizzie. Here's where we take orders for once, you and I."

It is the colonel's Hour. I suppose that having to work with Undergraduates is something he could never quite forget, but from the way he looks at us we might almost be Space Force personnel,—low-grade of course but respectable.

Everything is at last worked out and he has it on paper in front of him; he puts the paper four square on the table, gazes into the middle distance and proceeds to recite.

"One. This ship will go off Mass-Time on 2nd August at 11.27 hours ship's time....

"Thirty-six hours from now.

"... At a point one thousand miles vertically above Co-ordinates 165OE, 7320S, on Planet Incognita, approximately one hour before midnight local time.

"Going on planetary drive as close as that will indicate that something is badly wrong to begin with.

"Two. This ship will descend, coupled to Gilgamesh as at present, to a point seventy miles above the planetary surface. It will then uncouple, discharge one hopper, and go back on Mass-Time. Estimated time for this stage of descent forty minutes.

"Three. The hopper will then descend on its own engines at the maximum speed allowed by the heat-disposal system; estimated at thirty-seven minutes. Gilgamesh will complete descent in thirty-three minutes. Engines of Gilgamesh will not be used except for the heat-disposal and gyro auxiliaries. The following installations have been made to allow for the control of the descent; a ring of eight rockets in peltathene mounts around the tail and, and one outsize antigrav unit inside the nose. "Sympathizer" controls hooked up with a visiscreen and a computer have also been installed in the nose.

"Four. Gilgamesh will carry one man only. The hopper will carry a crew of three. The pilot of Gilgamesh will

establish the ship on the edge of the cliff, supported on antigrav a foot or so above the ground and leaning towards the sea at an angle of approximately 20° with the vertical. Except for this landing will be automatic.

"Five."

The colonel's voice has lulled us into passive acceptance; now we are jerked into sharper attention by the faintest possible check in it.

"The greatest danger attaching to the expedition is that the Incognitans may discover that the crash has been faked. This would be inevitable if they were to capture (a) the hopper; (b) any of the new installations in Gilgamesh, especially the antigrav; (c) any member of the crew.

"The function of the hopper is to pick up the pilot of Gilgamesh and also to check that ground appearances are consistent. If not, they will produce a landslip on the cliff edge, using power tools and explosives carried for the purpose. That is why the hopper has a

crew of three, but the chance of their having to do this is slight."

So I should think; ground appearances are supposed to show that Gilgamesh landed using emergency rockets and then toppled over the cliff and this will be exactly what happened.

"The pilot will carry a one-frequency low-power transmitter activated by the change in magnetic field on leaving the ship. The hopper will remain at five hundred feet until this signal is received. It will then pick up the pilot, check ground appearances, and rendezvous with this ship at two hundred miles up at 18.27 hours."

The ship and the hopper both being radar-absorbent will not register on alarm systems, and by keeping to planetary nighttime they should be safe from being seen.

"Danger (b) will be dealt with as follows. The rocket-mounts being of peltathene will be destroyed by half

an hour's immersion in water. The installations in the nose will be destroyed with Andite."

Andite produces complete colecular disruption in a very short range, hardly any damage outside it; the effect will be as though the nose broke off on impact; I suppose the Incognitans will waste a lot of time looking for it on the bed of the sea.

"Four ten-centimeter cartridges will be inserted within the nose installations. The fuse will have two alternative settings. The first will be timed to act at 12.50 hours, seven minutes after the estimated time of landing. It will not be possible to deactivate it before 12.45 hours. This takes care of the possibility of the pilot's becoming incapacitated during the descent.

"Having switched off the first fuse the pilot will get the ship into position and then activate a second, timed to blow in ten minutes. He will then leave the ship. When the antigrav is destroyed the ship will, of course, fall into the sea.

"Six. The pilot of Gilgamesh will wear a spacesuit of the pattern used by the original crew and will carry Personal Background Set number 23. Should he fail to escape from the ship the crew of the hopper will on no account attempt to rescue him."

The colonel takes up the paper, folds it in half and puts it down one inch further away.

"The hopper's crew," he says, "will give the whole game away should one of them fall into Incognitan hands, alive or dead. Therefore they don't take any risks of it."

He lifts his gaze ceilingwards. "I'm asking for three volunteers."

Silence. Manning the hopper is definitely second best. Then light suddenly bursts on me and I lift my hand and hack B on the ankle.

"I volunteer," I say.

B gives me a most dubious glance and then lifts her hand, too.

Cray on the other side of the table is slowly opening his mouth when there is an outburst of waving on the far side of B.

"Me too, colonel! I volunteer!"

Mr. Yardo proceeds to explain that his special job is over and done, he can be more easily spared than anybody, he may be too old to take charge of Gilgamesh but will back himself as a hopper pilot against anybody.

The colonel cuts this short by accepting all three. He then unfolds his paper again.

"Piloting Gilgamesh," he says. "I'm not asking for volunteers now. You'll go to your cabins in four hours' time and those who want to will volunteer, secretly. To a computer hookup, Computer will select on a random basis and notify the one chosen. Give him his final

instructions, too. No one need know who it was till it's all over. He can tell anyone he likes, of course."

A very slight note of triumph creeps into the next remark. "One point. Only men need volunteer."

Instant outcry from Kirsty and Dilly: B turns to me with a look of awe.

"Nothing to do with prejudice," says the colonel testily. "Just facts. The crew of Gilgamesh were all men. Can't risk one solitary woman being found on board. Besides—spacesuits, personal background sets—all designed for men."

Kirsty and Dilly turn on me looks designed to shrivel and B whispers "Lizzie how wonderful you are."

The session dissolves. We three get an intensive session course of instruction on our duties and are ordered off to sleep. After breakfast next morning I run into Cray who says, Before I continue about what is evidently pressing business would I care to kick him, hard?

Not right now I reply, what for anyway?

"Miss Lee," says Cray, dragging it out longer than ever, "although I have long realized that your brain functions in a way much superior to logic I had not sense enough yesterday to follow my own instinct and do what you do as soon as you did it; therefore that dessicated meat handler got in first."

I say: "So you weren't picked for pilot? It was only one chance in ten."

"Oh," says Cray, "did you really think so?" He gives me a long look and goes away.

I suppose he noticed that when the colonel came out with his remarks about No women in Gilgamesh I was as surprised as any.

Presently the three of us are issued with protective clothing; we just might have to venture out on the planet's surface and therefore we get white one-piece suits to protect against Cold, heat, moisture,

dessication, radioactivity, and mosquitoes, and they are quite becoming, really.

B and I drag out dressing for thirty minutes; then we just sit while Time crawls asymptotically towards the hour.

Then the speaker calls us to go.

We are out of the cabin before it says two words and racing for the hold; so that we are just in time to see a figure out of an Historical movie—padded, jointed, tin bowl for head and blank reflecting glass where the face should be—stepping through the air lock.

The colonel and Mr. Yardo are there already. The colonel packs us into the hopper and personally closes the door, and for once I know what he is thinking; he is wishing he were not the only pilot in this ship who could possibly rely on bringing the ship off and on Mass-Time at one particular defined spot of Space.

Then he leaves us; half an hour to go.

The light in the hold begins to alter. Instead of being softly diffused it separates into sharp-edged beams, reflecting and crisscrossing but leaving cones of shadow between. The air is being pumped into store.

Fifteen minutes.

The hull vibrates and a hatch slides open in the floor so that the black of Space looks through; it closes again.

Mr. Yardo lifts the hopper gently off its mounts and lets it back again.

Testing; five minutes to go.

I am hypnotized by my chronometer; the hands are crawling through glue; I am still staring at it when, at the exact second, we go off Mass-Time.

No weight. I hook my heels under the seat and persuade my esophagus back into place. A new period of waiting has begun. Every so often comes the impression we are falling head-first; the colonel using

ship's drive to decelerate the whole system. Then more free fall.

The hopper drifts very slowly out into the hold and hovers over the hatch, and the lights go. There is only the glow from the visiscreen and the instrument board.

One minute thirty seconds to go.

The hatch slides open again. I take a deep breath.

I am still holding it when the colonel's voice comes over the speaker: "Calling Gilgamesh. Calling the hopper. Good-by and Good luck. You're on your own."

The ship is gone.

Yet another stretch of time has been marked off for us. Thirty-seven minutes, the least time allowable if we are not to get overheated by friction with the air. Mr. Yardo is a good pilot; he is concentrating wholly on the visiscreen and the thermometer. B and I are free to look around.

I see nothing and say so.

I did not know or have forgotten that Incognita has many small satellites; from here there are four in sight.

I am still looking at them when B seizes my arm painfully and points below us.

I see nothing and say so.

B whispers it was there a moment ago, it is pretty cloudy down there—Yes Lizzie there it is look.

And I see it. Over to the left, very faint and far below, a pin-prick of light.

Light in the polar wastes of a sparsely inhabited planet, and since we are still five miles up it is a very powerful light too.

No doubt about it, as we descend farther; about fifty miles from our objective there are men, quite a lot of them.

I think it is just then that I understand, really understand, the hazard of what we are doing. This is not an exercise. This is in dead earnest, and if we have missed an essential factor or calculated something wrong the result will be not a bad mark or a failed exam, or even our personal deaths, but incalculable harm and misery to millions of people we never even heard of.

Dead earnest. How in Space did we ever have cheek enough for this?

The lights might be the essential factor we have missed, but there is nothing we can do about them now.

Mr. Yardo suddenly chuckles and points to the screen.

"There you are, girlies! He's down!"

There, grayly dim, is the map the colonel showed us; and right on the faint line of the cliff-edge is a small brilliant dot.

The map is expanding rapidly, great lengths of coastline shooting out of sight at the edge of the screen. Mr. Yardo has the cross-hairs centered on the dot which is Gilgamesh. The dot is changing shape; it is turning into a short ellipse, a longer one. The gyros are leaning her out over the sea.

I look at my chronometer; 12.50 hours exactly. B looks, too, and grips my hand.

Thirty seconds later the Andite has not blown; first fuse safety turned off. Surely she is leaning far enough out by now?

We are hovering at five hundred feet. I can actually see the white edge of the sea beating at the cliff. Mr. Yardo keeps making small corrections; there is a wind out there trying to blow us away. It is cloudy here: I can see neither moons nor stars.

Mr. Yardo checks the radio. Nothing yet.

I stare downwards and fancy I can see a metallic gleam.

Then there is a wordless shout from Mr. Yardo; a bright dot hurtles across the screen and at the same time I see a streak of blue flame tearing diagonally downwards a hundred feet away.

The hopper shudders to a flat concussion in the air, we are all thrown off balance, and when I claw my way back to the screen the moving dot is gone.

So is Gilgamesh.

B says numbly, "But it wasn't a meteor. It can't have been."

"It doesn't matter what it was," I say. "It was some sort of missile, I think. They must be even nearer to war than we thought."

We wait. What for, I don't know. Another missile, perhaps. No more come.

At last Mr. Yardo stirs. His voice sounds creaky.

"I guess," he says, then clears his throat, and tries again. "I guess we have to go back up."

B says, "Lizzie, who was it? Do you know?"

Of course I do. "Do you think M'Clare was going to risk one of us on that job? The volunteering was a fake. He went himself."

B whispers, "You're just guessing."

"Maybe," says Mr. Yardo, "but I happened to see through that face plate of his. It was the professor all right."

He has his hand on the controls when my brain starts working again. I utter a strangled noise and dive for the hatch into the cargo hold. B tries to grab me but I get it open and switch on the light.

Fifty-fifty chance—I've lost.

No, this is the one we came in and the people who put in the new cargo did not clear out my fish-boat, they just clamped it neatly to the wall.

I dive in and start to pass up the package. B shakes her head.

"No, Lizzie. We can't. Don't you remember? If we got caught, it would give everything away. Besides ... there isn't any chance—"

"Take a look at the screen," I tell her.

Sharp exclamation from Mr. Yardo. B turns to look, then takes the package and helps me back.

Mr. Yardo maneuvers out over the sea till the thing is in the middle of the screen; then drops to a hundred feet. It is sticking out of the water at a fantastic angle and the waves are hardly moving it. The nose of a ship.

"The antigrav," whispers B. "The Andite hasn't blown yet."

"Ten minutes," says Mr. Yardo thoughtfully. He turns to me with sudden briskness. "What's that, Lizzie girl? A fish-boat? Good. We may need it. Let's have a look."

"It's mine," I tell him.

"Now look—"

"Tailor made," I say. "You might get into it, though I doubt it. You couldn't work the controls."

It takes him fifteen seconds to realize there is no way round it; he is six foot three and I am five foot one. Even B would find it hard.

His face goes grayish and he stares at me helplessly. Finally he nods.

"All right, Lizzie. I guess we have to try it. Things certainly can't be much worse than they are. We'll go over to the beach there."

On the beach there is wind and spray and breakers but nothing unmanageable; the cliffs on either side

keep off the worst of the force. It is queer to feel moving air after eighteen days in a ship. It takes six minutes to unpack and expand the boat and by that time it is ten minutes since the missile hit and the Andite has not blown.

I crawl into the boat. In my protective clothing it is a fairly tight fit. We agree that I will return to this same point and they will start looking for me in fifty minutes' time and will give up if I have not returned in two hours. I take two Andite cartridges to deal with all eventualities and snap the nose of the boat into place. At first I am very conscious of the two little white cigars in the pouch of my suit, but presently I have other things to think about.

I use the "limbs" to crawl the last few yards of shingle into the water and on across the sea bottom till I am beyond the line of breakers; then I turn on the motor. I have already set the controls to "home" on Gilgamesh and the radar will steer me off any obstructions. This journey in the dark is as safe as my trip around the reefs before all this started—though it doesn't feel that way.

It takes twelve minutes to reach Gilgamesh, or rather the fragment that antigrav is supporting; it is about half a mile from the beach.

The radar stops me six feet from her and I switch it off and turn to Manual and inch closer in.

Lights, a very small close beam. The missile struck her about one third of her length behind the nose. I know, because I can see the whole of that length. It is hanging just above the water, sloping at about 30° to the horizontal. The ragged edge where it was torn from the rest is just dipping into the sea.

If anyone sees this, I don't know what they will make of it but no one could possibly think an ordinary spaceship suffered an ordinary crash, and very little investigation would show up the truth.

I reach up with the forward set of "limbs" and grapple on to the break. I now have somehow to get the hind set of "limbs" up without losing my grip. I can't.

It takes several minutes to realize that I can just open the nose and crawl out.

Immediately a wave hits me in the face and does its best to drag me into the sea. However the interior of the ship is relatively sheltered and presently I am inside and dragging the boat up out of reach.

I need light. Presently I manage to detach one of the two from the boat. I turn it down to minimum close beam and hang it round my neck; then I start up the black jag-edged tunnel of the ship.

I have to get to the nose, find the fuse, change the setting to twenty minutes—maximum possible—and get out before it blows—out of the water I mean. The fish-boat is not constructed to take explosions even half a mile away. But the first thing is to find the fuse and I cannot make out how Gilgamesh is lying and therefore cannot find the door through this bulkhead; everything is ripped and twisted. In the end I find a gap between the bulkhead itself and the hull, and squeeze through that.

In the next compartment things are more recognizable and I eventually find the door. Fortunately ships are designed so that you can get through doors even when they are in the ceiling; actually here I have to climb up an overhang, but the surface is provided with rungs which make it not too bad. Finally I reach the door. I shall have to use antigrav to get down ... why didn't I just turn it on and jump? I forgot I had it.

The door was a little way open when the missile struck; it buckled in its grooves and is jammed fast. I can get an arm through. No more. I switch on antigrav and hang there directing the light round the compartment. No rents anywhere, just buckling. This compartment is divided by a partition and the door through that is open. There will be another door into the nose on the other side.

I bring back my feet ready to kick off on a dive through that doorway.

Behind me, something stirs.

My muscles go into a spasm like the one that causes a falling dream, my hold tears loose and I go tumbling through the air, rebound from a wall, twist, and manage to hook one foot in the frame of the door I was aiming for. I pull myself down and turn off the antigrav; then I just shake for a bit.

The sound was—

This is stupid, with everything torn to pieces in this ship there is no wonder if bits shake loose and drop around—

But it was not a metallic noise, it was a kind of soft dragging, very soft, that ended in a little thump.

Like a—

Like a loose piece of plastic dislodged from its angle of rest and slithering down, pull yourself together Lizzie Lee.

I look through the door into the other half of this level. Shambles. Smashed machinery every which

way, blocking the door, blocking everything. No way through at all.

Suddenly I remember the tools. Mr. Yardo loaded the fish-boat with all it would take. I crawl back and return with a fifteen inch expanding beam-lever, and overuse it; the jammed trap door does not slide back in its grooves but flips right out of them, bent double; it flies off into the dark and clangs its way to rest.

I am halfway through the opening when I hear the sound again. A soft slithering; a faint defeated thump.

I freeze where I am, and then I hear the sigh; a long, long weary sound, almost musical.

An air leak somewhere in the hull and wind or waves altering the air pressure below.

All the same I do not seem able to come any farther through this door.

Light might help; I turn the beam up and play it cautiously around. This is the last compartment, right

in the nose; a sawn-off cone-shape. No breaks here, though the hull is buckled to my left and the "floor"—the partition, horizontal when the ship is in the normal operating position, which holds my trap door—is torn up; some large heavy object was welded to a thin surface skin which has ripped away leaving jagged edges and a pattern of girders below.

There is no dust here; it has all been sucked out when the ship was open to space; nothing to show the beam except the sliding yellow ellipse where it touches the wall. It glides and turns, spiraling down, deformed every so often where it crosses a projection or a dent, till it halts suddenly on a spoked disk, four feet across and standing nearly eighteen inches out from the wall. The antigrav.

I never saw one this size, it is like the little personal affairs as a giant is like a pigmy, not only bigger but a bit different in proportion. I can see an Andite cartridge fastened among the spokes.

The fuse is a "sympathizer" but it is probably somewhere close. The ellipse moves again. There is

no feeling that I control it; it is hunting on its own. To and fro around the giant wheel. Lower. It halts on a small flat box, also bolted to the wall, a little way below. This is it, I can see the dial.

The ellipse stands still, surrounding the fuse. There is something at the very edge of it.

When Gilgamesh was right way up the antigrav was bolted to one wall, about three feet above the floor. Now the lowest point is the place where this wall joins what used to be the floor. Something has fallen down to that point and is huddled there in the dark.

The beam jerks suddenly up and the breath whoops out of me; a round thing sticking out of the wall—then I realize it is an archaic space-helmet, clamped to the wall for safety when the wearer took it off.

I take charge of the ellipse of light and move it slowly down, past the fuse, to the thing below. A little dark scalloping of the edge of the light. The tips of fingers. A hand.

I turn up the light.

When the missile struck the big computer was wrenched loose from the floor. It careened down as the floor tilted, taking with it anything that stood in its way.

M'Clare was just stooping to the fuse, I think. The computer smashed against his legs and pinned him down in the angle between the wall and the floor. His legs are hidden by it.

Because of the spacesuit he does not looked crushed; the thick clumsy joints have kept their roundness, so far as they are visible; only his hands and head are bare and vulnerable looking.

I am halfway down, floating on minimum gravity, before it really occurs to me that he may be still alive.

I switch to half and drop beside him. His face is colorless but he is breathing all right.

First-aid kit. I will never make fun of Space Force thoroughness again. Rows and rows of small plastic ampoules. Needles.

Pain-killer, first. I read the directions twice, sweating. Emergencies only—this is. One dose only to be given and if patient is not in good health use—never mind that. I fit on the longest needle and jab it through the suit, at the back of the thigh, as far towards the knee-joint as I can get because the suit is thinner. Half one side, half the other.

Now to get the computer off. At a guess it weighs about five hundred pounds. The beam-lever would do it but it would probably fall back.

Antigrav; the personal size is supposed to take up to three times the weight of the average man. I take mine off and buckle the straps through a convenient gap. I have my hands under the thing when M'Clare sighs again.

He is lying on his belly but his head is turned to one side, towards me. Slowly his eyelids open. He catches

the sight of my hand; his head moves a little, and he says, "Lizzie. Golden Liz."

I say not to worry, we will soon be out of here.

His body jumps convulsively and he cries out. His hand reaches my sleeve and feels. He says, "Liz! Oh, God, I thought ... what—"

I say things are under control and just keep quiet a bit.

His eyes close. After a moment he whispers, "Something hit the ship."

"A homing missile, I think."

I ought not to have said that; but it seems to make no particular impression, maybe he guessed as much.

I was wrong in wanting to shift the computer straight away, the release of pressure might start a hemorrhage; I dig out ampoules of blood-seal and

inject them into the space between the suit and the flesh, as close to the damage as I can.

M'Clare asks how the ship is lying and I explain, also how I got here. I dig out the six-by-two-inch packet of expanding stretcher and read the directions. He is quiet for a minute or two, gathering strength; then he says sharply: "Lizzie. Stop that and listen.

"The fuse for the Andite is just under the antigrav. Go and find it. Go now. There's a dial with twenty divisions. Marked in black—you see it. Turn the pointer to the last division. Is that done?

"Now you see the switch under the pointer? Is your boat ready? I beg your pardon, of course you left it that way. Then turn the switch and get out."

I come back and see by my chrono that the blood-seal should be set; I get my hands under the computer. M'Clare bangs his hand on the floor.

"Lizzie, you little idiot, don't you realize that even if you get me out of this ship, which is next to

impossible, you'll be delayed all the way—and if the Incognitans find either of us the whole plan's ruined? Much worse than ruined, once they see it's a hoax—"

I tell him I have two Andite sticks and they won't find us and on a night like this any story of explosions will be put down to sudden gusts or to lightning.

He is silent for a moment while I start lifting the computer, carefully; its effective weight with the antigrav full on is only about twenty pounds but is has all its inertia. Then he says quietly, "Please, Lizzie—can't you understand that the worst nightmare in the whole affair has been the fear that one of you might get injured? Or even killed? When I realized that only one person was needed to pilot Gilgamesh—it was the greatest relief I ever experienced. Now you say...." His voice picks up suddenly. "Lizzie, you're beaten anyway. The ... I'm losing all feeling. Even pain. I can't feel anything behind my shoulders ... it's creeping up __"

I say that means the pain-killer I shot him with is acting as advertised, and he makes a sound as much

like an explosive chuckle as anything and it's quiet again.

The curvature between floor and wall is not helpful, I am trying to find a place to wedge the computer so it cannot fall back when I take off the antigrav. Presently I get it pushed on to a sort of ledge formed by a dent in the floor, which I think will hold it. I ease off the antigrav and the computer stays put, I don't like the looks of it so let's get out of here.

I push the packaged stretcher under his middle and pull the tape before I turn the light on to his legs to see the damage. I cannot make out very much; the joints of the suit are smashed some, but as far as I can see the inner lining is not broken which means it is still air-and-water-tight.

I put a hand under his chest to feel how the stretcher is going; it is now expanded to eighteen inches by six and I can feel it pushing out, but it is slow, what else have I to do—oh yes, get the helmet.

I am standing up to reach for it when M'Clare says, "What are you doing? Yes ... well, don't put it on for a minute. There's something I would like to tell you, and with all respect for your obstinacy I doubt very much whether I shall have another chance. Keep that light off me, will you? It hurts my eyes.

"You know, Lizzie, I dislike risking the lives of any of the students for whom I am responsible, but as it happens I find the idea of you—blowing yourself to atoms particularly objectionable because ... I happen to be in love with you. You're also one of my best students, I used to think that ... was why I'd been so insistent on your coming to Russett, but I rather think ... my motives were mixed even then. I meant to tell you this after you graduated, and to ask you to marry me, not that ... I thought you would, I know quite well ... you never quite forgave me, but I don't-want-to-have to remember ... I didn't ... have the guts to—"

His voice trails off, I get a belated rush of sense to the head and turn the light on his face. His head is turned sideways and his fist is clenched against the side of

his neck. When I touch it his hand falls open and five discharged ampoules fall out.

Pain-killer.

Maximum dose, one ampoule.

All that talk was just to hold my attention while he fixed the needles and—

I left the kit spread out right next to him.

While I am taking this in some small cold corner of my mind is remembering the instructions that are on the pain-killer ampoule; it does not say, outright, that it is the last refuge for men in the extremity of pain and despair; therefore it cannot say, outright, that they sometimes despair too soon; but it does tell you the name of the antidote.

There are only three ampoules of this and they also say, maximum dose one ampoule. I try to work it out but lacking all other information the best I can do is

inject two and keep one till later. I put that one in my pocket.

The stretcher is all expanded now; a very thin but quite rigid grid, six feet by two; I lash him on it without changing his position and fasten the helmet over his head.

Antigrav; the straps just go round him and the stretcher.

I point the thing up towards the trap door and give it a gentle push; then I scramble up the rungs and get there just in time to guide it through. It takes a knock then and some more while I am getting it down to the next partition, but he can't feel it.

This time I find the door, because the roar of noise behind it acts as a guide. The sea is getting up and is dashing halfway to the door as I crawl through. My boat is awash, pivoting to and fro on the grips of the front "limbs."

I grab it, release the limbs and pull it as far back as the door. I maneuver the stretcher on top and realize there is nothing to fasten it with … except the antigrav, I get that undone, holding the stretcher in balance, and manage to put it under the stretcher and pass the straps between the bars of the grid … then round the little boat, and the buckle just grips the last inch. It will hold, though.

I set the boat to face the broken end of the ship, but I daren't put it farther back than the doorway; I turn the antigrav to half, fasten the limb-grips and rush back towards the nose of the ship. Silver knob under the dial. I turn it down, hear the thing begin a fast, steady ticking, and turn and run.

Twenty minutes.

One and a half to get back to the boat, four to get inside it without overturning. Nearly two to get down to the sea—balance difficult. One and a half to lower myself in.

Thirty seconds' tossing before I sink below the wave layer; then I turn the motor as high as I dare and head for the shore.

In a minute I have to turn it down; at this speed the radar is bothered by water currents and keeps steering me away from them as though they were rocks; I finally find the maximum safe speed but it is achingly slow. What happens if you are in water when Andite blows half a mile away? A moment's panic as I find the ship being forced up, then I realize I have reached the point where the beach starts to shelve, turn off radar and motor and start crawling. Eternal slow reach out, grab, shove, haul, with my heart in my mouth; then suddenly the nose breaks water and I am hauling myself out with a last wave doing its best to overbalance me.

I am halfway out of the boat when the Andite blows behind me. There is a flat slapping sound; then an instant roar of wind as the air receives the binding energies of several tons of matter; then a long wave comes pelting up the beach and snatches at the boat.

I huddle into the shingle and hold the boat; I have just got the antigrav turned off, otherwise I think it would have been carried away. There are two or three more big waves and a patter of spray; then it is over.

The outlet valve of the helmet is working, so M'Clare is still breathing; very deep, very slow.

I unfasten the belt of the antigrav, having turned it on again, and pull the belt through the buckle. No time to take it off and rearrange it; anyway it will work as well under the stretcher as on top of it. I drag the boat down to the water, put in an Andite cartridge with the longest fuse I have, set the controls to take it straight out to sea at maximum depth the radar control will allow—six feet above bottom—and push it off. The other Andite cartridge starts burning a hole in my pocket; I would have liked to put that in too, but I must keep it, in case.

I look at my chrono and see that in five minutes the hopper will come.

Five minutes.

I am halfway back to the stretcher when I hear a noise further up the beach. Unmistakable. Shingle under a booted foot.

I stand frozen in mid-stride. I turned the light out after launching the boat but my eyes have not recovered yet; it is murkily black. Even my white suit is only the faintest degree paler than my surroundings.

Silence for a couple of minutes. I stand still. But it can't have gone away. What happens when the hopper comes? They will see whoever it is on the infrared vision screen. They won't come—

Footsteps again. Several.

Then the clouds part and one of those superfluous little moons shines straight through the gap.

The bay is not like the stereo the colonel showed because that was taken in winter; now the snow is melted, leaving bare shingle and mud and a tumble of

rocks; more desolate than the snow. Fifty feet off is a man.

He is huddled up in a mass of garments but his head is bare, rising out of a hood which he has pushed back, maybe so as to listen better; he looks young, hardly older than me. He is holding a long thin object which I never saw before, but it must be a weapon of some sort.

This is the end of it. All the evidence of faking is destroyed; except M'Clare and me. Even if I use the Andite he has seen me—and that leaves M'Clare.

I am standing here on one foot like a dancer in a jammed movie, waiting for Time to start again or the world to end—

Like the little figure in the dance-instruction kit Dad got when I was seven, when you switched her off in the middle.

Like a dancer—

My weight shifts on to the forward foot. My arms swing up, forwards, back. I take one step, another.

Swing. Turn. Kick. Sideways.

Like the silly little dancer who could not get out of the plastic block; but I am moving forward little by little, even if I have to take three steps roundabout for every one in advance.

Arms, up. Turn, round. Leg, up. Straighten, out. Step.

Called the Dance of the Little Robot, for about three months Dad thought it was no end cute, till he caught on I was thinking so, too.

It is just about the only kind of dance you could do on shingle, I guess.

When this started I thought I might be going crazy, but I just had not had time to work it out. In terms of Psychology it goes like this; to shoot off a weapon a man needs a certain type of Stimulus like the sight of an enemy over the end of it. So if I do my best not to

look like an enemy he will not get that Stimulus. Or put it another way most men think twice before shooting a girl in the middle of a dance. If I should happen to get away with this, nobody will believe his story, he won't believe it himself.

As for the chance of getting away with it, i.e., getting close enough to grab the gun or hit him with a rock or something, I know I would become a Stimulus to shooting before I did that but there are always the clouds, if one will only come back over the moon again.

I have covered half the distance.

Twenty feet from him, and he takes a quick step back.

Turn, kick, out, step. I am swinging round away from him, let's hope he finds it reassuring. I dare not look up but I think the light is dimming. Turn, kick, out, step. Boxing the compass. Coming round again.

And the cloud is coming over the moon, out of the corner of my eye I see darkness sweeping towards us

—and I see his face of sheer horror as he sees it, too; he jumps back, swings up the weapon, and fires straight in my face.

And it is dark. So much for Psychology.

There is a clatter and other sounds—

Well, quite a lot for Psychology maybe, because at twenty feet he seems to have missed me.

I pick myself up and touch something which apparently is his weapon, gun or whatever. I leave it and hare back to the stretcher, next-to fall over it but stop just in time, and switch on the antigrav. Up; level it; now where to? The cliffs enclosing the bay are about thirty yards off to my left and they offer the only cover.

The shingle is relatively level; I make good time till I stumble against a rock and nearly lose the stretcher. I step up on to the rock and see the cliff as a blacker mass in the general darkness, only a yard away. I edge the stretcher round it.

It is almost snatched out of my hand by a gust of wind. I pull it back and realize that in the bay I have been sheltered; there is pretty near half a gale blowing across the face of the cliff.

Voices and footsteps, away back among the rocks where the man came from.

If the clouds part again they will see me, sure as shooting.

I take a hard grip on the stretcher and scramble round the edge of the cliff.

After the first gust the wind is not so bad; for the most part it is trying to press me back into the cliff. The trouble is that I can't see. I have to shuffle my foot forward, rubbing one shoulder against the cliff to feel where it is because I have no hand free.

After a few yards I come to an impasse; something more than knee high; boulder, ridge, I can't tell.

I weigh on the edge of the stretcher and tilt it up to get it over the obstacle. With the antigrav full on it keeps its momentum and goes on moving up. I try to check it, but the wind gets underneath.

It is tugging to get away; I step blindly upwards in the effort to keep up with it. One foot goes on a narrow ledge, barely a toe hold. I am being hauled upwards. I bring the other foot up and find the top of a boulder, just within reach. Now the first foot—

And now I am on top of the boulder, but I have lost touch with the cliff and the full force of the wind is pulling the stretcher upwards. I get one arm over it and fumble underneath for the control of the antigrav; I must give it weight and put it down on this boulder and wait for the wind to drop.

Suddenly I realize that my weight is going; bending over the stretcher puts me in the field of the antigrav. A moment later another gust comes, and I realize I am rising into the air.

Gripping the edge of the stretcher with one hand I reach out the other, trying to grasp some projection on the face of the cliff. Not being able to see I simply push farther away till it is out of reach.

We are still rising.

I pull myself up on the stretcher; there is just room for my toes on either side of M'Clare's legs. The wind roaring in my ears makes it difficult to think.

Rods of light slash down at me from the edge of the cliff. For a moment all I can do is duck; then I realize we are still well below them, but rising every moment. The cliff-face is about six feet away; the wind reflecting from it keeps us from being blown closer.

I must get the antigrav off. I let myself over the side of the stretcher, hanging by one hand, and fumble for the controls. I can just reach. Then I realize this is no use. Antigrav controls are not meant to go off with a click of the finger; they might get switched off accidentally. To work the switch and the safety you must have two hands, or one hand in the optimum

position. My position is about as bad as it could be. I can stroke the switch with one finger; no more.

I haul myself back on to the stretcher and realize we are only about six feet under the beam of light. Only one thing left. I feel in my pocket for the Andite. Stupidly, I am still also bending over the outlet valve of the helmet, trying to see whether M'Clare is still breathing or not.

The little white cigar is not fused. I have to hold on with one hand. In the end I manage to stick the Andite between thumb and finger-roots of that hand while I use the other to find the fuse and stick it over the Andite. The shortest; three minutes.

I think the valve is still moving—

Then something drops round me; I am hauled tight against the stretcher; we are pulled strongly downwards with the wind buffeting and snatching, banged against the edge of something, and pulled through into silence and the dark.

For a moment I do not understand; then I recognize the feel of Fragile Cargo, still clamping me to the stretcher, and I open my mouth and scream and scream.

Clatter of feet. Hatch opens. Fragile Cargo goes limp.

I stagger to my feet. Faint light through the hatch; B's head. I hold out the Andite stick and she turns and shouts; and a panel slides open in the wall so that the wind comes roaring in.

I push the stick through and the wind snatches it away and it is gone.

After that—

After that, for a while, nothing, I suppose, though I have no recollection of losing consciousness; only without any sense of break I find I am flat on my back on one of the seats in the cabin of the hopper.

I sit up and say "How—"

B who is sitting on the floor beside me says that when the broadcaster was activated of course they came at once, only while they were waiting for the boat to reach land whole squads of land cars arrived and started combing the area, and some came up on top of the cliff and shone their headlights out over the sea so Mr. Yardo had to lurk against the cliff face and wait till I got into a position where he could pick me up and it was frightfully clever of me to think of floating up on antigrav—

I forgot about the broadcaster.

I forgot about the hopper come to that, there seemed to be nothing in the world except me and the stretcher and the enemy.

Stretcher.

I say, "Is M'Clare—"

At which moment Mr. Yardo turns from the controls with a wide smile of triumph and says "Eighteen

twenty-seven, girls!" and the world goes weightless and swings upside down.

Then still with no sense of any time-lapse I am lying in the big lighted hold, with the sound of trampling all round: it is somehow filtered and far off and despite the lights there seems to be a globe of darkness around my head. I hear my own voice repeating, "M'Clare? How's M'Clare?"

A voice says distantly, without emphasis, "M'Clare? He's dead."

The next time I come round it is dark. I am vaguely aware of having been unconscious for quite a while.

There is a single thread of knowledge connecting this moment with the last: M'Clare's dead.

This is the central factor: I seem to have been debating it with myself for a very long time.

I suppose the truth is simply that the Universe never guarantees anything; life, or permanence, or that your best will be good enough.

The rule is that you have to pick yourself up and go on; and lying here in the dark is not doing it.

I turn on my side and see a cluster of self-luminous objects including a light switch. I reach for it.

How did I get into a hospital?

On second thoughts it is a cabin in the ship, or rather two of them with the partition torn out, I can see the ragged edge of it. There is a lot of paraphernalia around; I climb out to have a look.

Holy horrors what's happened? Someone borrowed my legs and put them back wrong; my eyes also are not functioning well, the light is set at Minimum and I am still dazzled. I see a door and make for it to get Explanations from somebody.

Arrived, I miss my footing and stumble against the door and on the other side someone says "Hello, Lizzie. Awake at last?"

I think my heart stops for a moment. I can't find the latch. I am vaguely aware of beating something with my fists, and then the door gives, sticks, gives again and I stumble through and land on all fours the other side of it.

Someone is calling: "Lizzie! Are you hurt? Where the devil have they all got to? Liz!"

I sit up and say, "They said you were dead!"

"Who did?"

"I ... I ... someone in the hold. I said How's M'Clare? and they said you were dead."

M'Clare frowns and says gently, "Come over here and sit down quietly for a bit. You've been dreaming."

Have I? Maybe the whole thing was a dream—but if so how far does it go? Going down in the heli? The missile? The boat? Crawling through the black tunnel of a broken ship?

No, because he is sitting in a sort of improvised chaise longue and his legs are evidently strapped in place under the blanket; he is fumbling with the fastening or something.

I say "Hey! Cut that out!"

He straightens up irritably.

"Don't you start that, Lysistrata. I've been suffering the attentions of the damnedest collection of amateur nurses who ever handled a thermocouple, for over a week. I don't deny they've been very efficient, but when it comes to—"

Over a week?

He nods. "My dear Lizzie, we left Incognita ten days ago. Amateur nursing again! They have some unholy

book of rules which says that for Exposure, Exhaustion and Shock the best therapy is sleep. I don't doubt it, but it goes on to say that in extreme cases the patient has been known to benefit by as much as two weeks of it. I didn't find out that they were trying it on you until about thirty-six hours ago when I began inquiring why you weren't around. They kept me under for three days—in fact until their infernal Handbook said it was time for my leg muscles to have some exercise. Miss Lammergaw was the ring-leader."

No wonder my legs feel as though someone exchanged the muscles for cotton wool, just wait till I get hold of Kirsty.

If it hadn't been for her, I shouldn't have spent ten days remembering, even in my sleep, that—

I say, "Hell's feathers, it was you!"

M'Clare makes motions as though to start getting out of his chair, looking seriously alarmed. I say, "It was your voice! When I asked—"

M'Clare, quite definitely, starts to blush. Not much, but some.

"Lizzie, I believe you're right. I have a sort of vague memory of someone asking how I was—and I gave what I took to be a truthful answer. I remember it seemed quite inconceivable that I could be alive. In fact I still don't understand it. Neither Yardo nor Miss Laydon could tell me. How did you get me out of that ship?"

Well, I do my best to explain, glossing over one or two points; at the finish he closes his eyes and says nothing for a while.

Then he says, "So except for this one man who saw you, you left no traces at all?"

Not that I know of, but—

"Do you know, five minutes later there were at least twenty men in that bay, most of them scientists? They don't seem to have found anything suspicious.

Visibility was bad, of course, and you can't leave foot-prints in shingle—"

Hold on, what is all this?

M'Clare says, "We've had two couriers while you were asleep. Yes, I know it's not ordinarily possible for a ship on Mass-Time to get news. One of these days someone will have an interesting problem in Cultural Engineering, working out how to integrate some of these Space Force secrets into our economic and social structure without upsetting the whole of the known volume. Though courier boats make their crews so infernally sick I doubt whether the present type will ever come into common use. Anyway, we've had transcripts of a good many broadcasts from Incognita, the last dated four days ago; and as far as we can tell they're interpreting Gilgamesh just as we meant them to.

"The missile, by the way, was experimental, waiting to be test-fired the next day. The man in charge saw Gilgamesh on the alarm screens and got trigger-happy. The newscasters were divided as to whether

he should be blamed or praised; they all seem to feel he averted a menace, at least temporarily, but some of them think the invaders could have been captured alive.

"The first people on the scene came from a scientific camp; you and Miss Laydon saw their lights on the way down. You remember that area is geophysically interesting? Well, by extraordinary good luck an international group was there studying it. They rushed straight off to the site of the landing—they actually saw Gilgamesh, and she registered on some of their astronomical instruments, too. They must be a reckless lot. What's more, they started trying to locate her on the sea bottom the next day. Found both pieces; they're still trying to locate the nose. They were all set to try raising the smaller piece when their governments both announced in some haste that they were sending a properly equipped expedition. Jointly.

"There's been no mention in any newscast of anyone seeing fairies or sea maidens—I expect the poor devil thinks you were a hallucination."

So we brought it off.

I am very thankful in a distant sort of way, but right now the Incognitans have no more reality for me than the Lost Kafoozalum.

M'Clare came through alive.

I could spend a good deal of time just getting used to that fact, but there is something I ought to say and I don't know how.

I inquire after his injuries and learn they are healing nicely.

I look at him and he is frowning.

He says, "Lizzie. Just before my well-meant but ineffective attempt at suicide—"

Here it comes.

I say quick If he is worrying about all that nonsense he talked in order to distract my attention, forget it; I have.

Silence, then he says wearily, "I talked nonsense, did I?"

I say there is no need to worry, under the circumstances anyone would have a perfect right to be raving off his Nut.

I then find I cannot bear this conversation any longer so I get up saying I expect he is tired and I will call someone.

I get nearly to the door when

"No, Lizzie! you can't let that crew loose on me just in order to change the conversation. Come back here. I appreciate your wish to spare my feelings, but it's wasted. We'll have this out here and now.

"I remember quite well what I said, and so do you: I said that I loved you. I also said that I had intended to

ask you to marry me as soon as you ceased to be one of my pupils. Well, the results of Finals were officially announced three days ago.

"Oh, I suppose I always knew what the answer would be, but I didn't want to spend the rest of my life wondering, because I never had the guts to ask you.

"You don't dislike me as you used to—you've forgiven me for making you come to Russett—but you still think I'm a cold-blooded manipulator of other people's minds and emotions. So I am; it's part of the job.

"You're quite right to distrust me for that, though. It is the danger of this profession, that we end up by looking on everybody and everything as a subject for manipulation. Even in our personal lives. I always knew that: I didn't begin to be afraid of it until I realized I was in love with you.

"I could have made you love me, Lizzie. I could! I didn't try. Not that I didn't want love on those terms, or any terms. But to use professional ... tricks ... in private life, ends by destroying all reality. I always

treated you exactly as I treated my other students—I think. But I could have made you think you loved me ... even if I am twice your age—"

This I cannot let pass, I say "Hi! According to College rumor you cannot be more than thirty-six; I'm twenty-three."

M'Clare says in a bemused sort of way He will be thirty-seven in a couple of months.

I say, "I will be twenty-four next week and your arithmetic is still screwy; and here is another datum you got wrong. I do love you. Very much."

He says, "Golden Liz."

Then other things which I remember all right, I shall keep them to remember any time I am tired, sick, cold, hungry Hundred-and-ninety—; but they are not for writing down.

Then I suppose at some point we agreed it is time for me to go, because I find myself outside the cabin and there is Colonel Delano-Smith.

He makes me a small speech about various matters ending that he hears he has to congratulate me.

Huh?

Oh, Space and Time did one of those unimitigated so-and-sos, my dear classmates, leave M'Clare's communicator on?

The colonel says he heard I did very well in my Examinations.

Sweet splitting photons I forgot all about Finals.

It is just as well my Education has come to an honorable end, because ... well, shades of ... well, Goodness gracious and likewise Dear me, I am going to marry a Professor.

Better just stick to it I am going to marry M'Clare, it makes better sense that way.

But Gosh we are going to have to do some re-adjusting to a changed Environment. Both of us.

Oh, well, M'Clare is a Professor of Cultural Engineering and I just past my Final Exams in same; surely if anyone can we should be able to work out how you live Happily Ever After?